

Appendix A – Discussion Guides

HMRC/DfE

Families' experiences and behaviour in the Childcare Affordability Pilots (CAP09)**Discussion Guide – FINAL (01/10/10)****Disabled Children's Pilot – Not Interested and Interested groups - EXTENDED****Objectives of the Disabled Children's pilot:**

The aim of the Disabled Children's pilot is to test whether increasing the childcare cost limits (but maintaining support at 80% of costs) for families with disabled children, increases the number of such parents entering sustainable employment and taking up formal childcare. These higher limits are £250 for one disabled child, £300 for one severely disabled child and £350 for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled. This study is important and will help HM Revenue & Customs and the Department for Education better understand the needs and experiences of parents of disabled children.

A total of 50 interviews will be conducted for this study, around 20 interviews will be with customers in the Control group who were offered 80% costs with the current limits (£175 for one child and £300 for two or more children), and around 30 interviews will be with customers in the Pilot group who were offered 80% costs with higher limits (£250 for one disabled child, £300 for one severely disabled child and £350 for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled). In addition to this, each participant will belong to one of the following groups¹:

- **Group 3: Families who have been in contact with *Spoken For* but said they did not want to register an interest;**
- **Group 4: Families who have registered an interest but did not find work and childcare before the pilot closed in April 2010;**
- Group 5: Families who registered an interest and have subsequently found work and childcare.

The objective of these interviews is to understand the reasons for why customers in Groups 3 and 4 are choosing not to, or are unable to take part in the Childcare Affordability Programme.

Specific objectives are as follows:

- To explore why after receiving notification of assistance with their childcare costs, some families chose not to or were unable to move into work and childcare,
- To explore awareness of CCE, what parents were aware they were available for
- To explore why they were unable to find work and whether the offer caused them to increase their job search intensity?
- To explore what kind of mix (formal/informal) parents are using, and their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of each.
- For families who registered an interest in the offer, but did not move into work and/or childcare:
 - To explore the reasons why they were interested in the pilot;
 - To explore the barriers which prevented them from moving into work and/or formal childcare; and,
 -
- To explore the reasons why some families told the helpline that they were not interested in the offer.
 - Were there any issues surrounding perceived eligibility?

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.

- To explore why they were unable to find suitable childcare: Why did they consider childcare to be unsuitable? And to what extent this was a factor in them not taking up the offer?

Objectives of the DfE extended interviews

The aim of the project extension of the Disabled Children's pilot is to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents of disabled children in finding and using childcare for their disabled children and examine the extent to which affordability and accessibility are barriers to using childcare.

These interviews are being undertaken with 10 people (4 from Group 3 and 6 from Group 4) who received notification of the pilot offer and subsequently did not take it up, as well as with 10 people (4 from Group 3 and 6 from Group 4) who received notification of the control offer and subsequently did not take this up.

Specific objectives are as follows:

- To explore parents' perceptions of the degree to which cost is a barrier to take-up of childcare including:
 - Financial limitations - knowledge of benefits including what entitled to and how to claim
 - Whether childcare providers charge more for care of disabled children
 - Whether cost of transport is a barrier to use of childcare
- To explore parents' level of confidence in providers (particularly with children with complex needs) and possible attitudinal barriers on part of some providers/parents.
- To explore parents' perceptions and experiences of availability and level of flexibility of appropriate childcare including:-
 - Siblings being able to access childcare with same provider
 - Possible shortfall in holiday and/or leisure activities
 - How they access information on childcare (including their knowledge, and use of, Family Information Service (FIS)).

Note to moderator:

The participants in this research should all recall receiving a copy of the letter outlining the details of Pilot scheme which offered parents of Disabled children in London **80% of childcare costs with higher limits of £250 per week for a disabled child, £300 per week for a severely disabled child and £350 for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled.** They will also fall into one of the following groups:

Group 3

- These families have been in contact with the helpline and said they did not want to register an interest.
- With this group we will be particularly interested in finding out their reasons for not being interested in the pilot, their view of the helpline, and their view of the offer.

Group 4

- These families have been in contact with the helpline, and registered an interest but were subsequently unable to find work and childcare

- This group will potentially have a lot to say about the impact of the pilot on their search for work and suitable childcare in the area, as well as the barriers they faced in looking for suitable work and childcare.

Please keep the group you are interviewing in mind while you are conducting the interview and probe and challenge sensitively and accordingly.

Further information:

- We will conduct paired-depth interviews with couples where appropriate;
- All pilot interviews will be held in London between 11th October and 19th November 2010
- All control interviews will be held in the West Midlands between 11th October and 19th November 2010
- Each interview/depth to last approximately between one hour and ninety minutes and two hours.

Notes	Guide Sections	Guide Timings
1. Introductions and background	Sets the scene, reassures participants about the interview, confidentiality. Discusses the general work and life circumstances of the participant.	5 minutes
2. Transition into employment	This section explores how the participant made the transition into employment in the past. It looks at the triggers and barriers to employment, and their childcare arrangements if they had any. This section will also explore how they went about gaining employment and what barriers existed to them doing so.	Up to 20 minutes
3. Journey to when they received the letter	This section explores the respondents situation when they received the letter and how this may have influenced their decision not to take up the offer. We are also looking to gauge any lifestyle factors, such as their general levels of organisation and their general attitudes to mail.	Up to 20 minutes
4. Barriers to work	This section examines what are the main barriers to them finding work and to what extent is finding work the main barrier to them not taking up the pilot offer.	Up to 20 minutes
5. Experiences and perceptions of childcare	This section explores current and past use of formal childcare as well as perceptions of formal childcare and how these impact upon their decision to use it	Up to 10 minutes
6. Accessibility and Confidence in childcare	This section explores the extent to which accessibility and confidence in childcare providers is a barrier to use of formal childcare.	Up to 20 minutes
7. Affordability of childcare and other barriers.	This section explores the extent to which affordability of childcare providers is a barrier to use of formal childcare as well as the extent to which childcare was the main barrier to take up of the offer.	Up to 20 minutes
8. Conclusion	Summing up and concluding remarks	5 minutes
		1 hour 30 minutes

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 = 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	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	

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
5 mins	<p>1. Welcome and introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank participant for taking part • Introduce self, Ipsos MORI • Check that speaking with the main carer of the child (and check who this is in paired depths). • Emphasise that we will be talking about their experiences and barriers to finding work and childcare • Confidentiality: reassure all responses anonymous and that information about individuals will not be passed on to anyone, including back to 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 received a letter between September and November 2009 informing you of the Childcare Affordability Programme; this was a special system of help being offered by the Government to the parents of disabled children in London, which offered extra help with childcare costs if you chose to move into work for at least 16 hours per week per parent. Is this correct?</p> <p>And, just to confirm, you did not take up this offer?</p> <p><i>Mention that we will go into the reasons why in more detail later in the interview.</i></p> <p>CONTROL RECRUITMENT CHECK: I believe you received a letter between September and November 2009 informing you about the help with childcare costs which is available if you chose to move into work for at least 16 hours per week. Is that correct?</p> <p>And, just to confirm, you did not take up this offer?</p>	<p>Welcome: orientates participant, gets them prepared to take part in the interview.</p> <p><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>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> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Fine to mention HMRC at this stage. However, please do not mention the alternative limits of payment to participants</p> <p>Note that some families who were offered the pilot did not they get the increased amount because they did not go through the CAP09 process – if they have missed out on an increased amount this will need to be approached sensitively.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Some Group 3 participants may not remember the offer as they were contacted almost a year ago and may have had very little contact with Spoken For about it.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p><i>Mention that we will go into the reasons why in more detail later in the interview.</i></p> <p><u>Personal Background</u></p> <p>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 <u>how old are they?</u> - Does anyone else live with you? PROBE: Partner, another family member, friends. - I understand that you have a disabled child/ren, is that right? Can you tell me a little bit about them? <p>MODERATOR: sensitively probe on the type of disability/ disabilities the child/ren have and what specialist care they may require/ their names/ age/what does the mentioned disability mean/ how does it affect his/her day-to-day activities?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Try to get an understanding of what specialist care their child needs because of their disability but do so sensitively. After this point also refer to the disabled child by name rather than 'disabled'</p> <p>And can I ask, are you currently employed?</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What job do you do? - How many hours a week do you work? Full time or part time? - How long have you been doing that job? - What did you do before this job? - How are you finding your work? - Does anyone else live with you? PROBE: Partner, another family member, friends. <p>If APPLICABLE: Can you tell me about any work that they do?</p> <p>What benefits or tax credits, 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>MODERATOR NOTE: The pilot group may have previously claimed or currently claim (for children who are not disabled) the standard help towards childcare costs through the tax credits system. Please clarify that we are talking about the offer of help for parents of disabled children.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Particularly important to get the age of the disabled child – the childcare available for a 3 year old child with complex needs may vary considerably from after school or holiday childcare for a 13 year old with complex needs.</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>If a paired depth, ask these questions to both participants.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please note that for the purposes of the pilot, working less than 16 hours a week will count as being unemployed, Please be aware that participants working less than 16 hours a week are likely to consider themselves employed.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: We expect the majority not to be in work as the group was originally selected because they were out of work. However, others may be in work but not childcare.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: We are primarily interested in the participant and their partner, but if others in the household contribute in some way financially that is also of some, but limited interest.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>MODERATOR: USE SHOWCARD A LISTING BENEFITS</p> <p>And how long have you been receiving each of these?</p>	
<p>Up to 20 mins</p>	<p><u>2. Transition into employment and use of childcare:</u></p> <p>IF PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED OR RECENTLY EMPLOYED.</p> <p>I'd like to start by looking at the work that you have done in the past. I've got a diary here to help us map out what you have done over the years?</p> <p>MODERATOR TO USE THE DIARY IN APPENDICES.</p> <p>NOTE TO MODERATOR: If conducting a paired depth, complete diary for both participants. However, please focus on the detailed experiences of the partner who has most recently made the transition to employment.</p> <p>Starting from January last year, please tell me about any work that you have undertaken since then, up until the present day?</p> <p>NOTE TO MODERATOR: IF PARTICIPANT HAS NOT WORKED since January 2009 THEN ASK THEM TO TALK ABOUT WORK THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. TRY TO ACHIEVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TYPE OF WORK THEY HAVE DONE, WHETHER THEY HAVE EVER BEEN IN STABLE EMPLOYMENT, AND IF THEY HAVE EVER USED CHILDCARE WHILE WORKING</p> <p>Try to go chronologically, by month, probing with the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was this work permanent, temporary or casual? 2. What kind of work were you doing? PROBE: Role, skill level, sector and location (in relation to proximity to the home). 3. What were your working hours? Did you have regular working hours, or did your working hours change regularly? 4. IF MOVED JOB/LEFT EMPLOYMENT: Why was this? PROBE FULLY TO ASCERTAIN THE EXTENT TO WHICH CHILDCARE WAS A FACTOR. <p>MODERATOR: ENSURE THAT THE FOCUS OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IS ON THE NEEDS AND CARE OF THE DISABLED CHILD/ CHILDREN</p>	<p>Try and get as much detail as possible – it may be that people have worked and arranged childcare in the past, in which case we will want to know what has changed to make them refuse the latest offer of help.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: If the participant has not worked since Jan 2009 briefly discuss their employment history – but more interested the type and stability of work they have had rather than a list of every job.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE – need to unpick the barriers to employment so we can work out the extent to which the offer may have helped to overcome these and pick it up later when asking why they didn't take up the pilot.</p> <p>Use the prompt card here, for the next few questions.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>5. ASK IF APPLICABLE (DEPENDING ON HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, AGE OF CHILDREN). How did you manage to balance working with looking after your disabled child? Who looked after them when you were in work? PROBE FULLY FOR ALL SOURCES OF CHILDCARE – FORMAL (such as nurseries or childminders) AND INFORMAL (such as family or friends).</p> <p>6. What formal childcare provider(s) did you use? By formal childcare providers I mean those who are registered with Ofsted and have an official Ofsted number (i.e. the providers that you are required to use to qualify for the assistance provided by HMRC) and nannies.</p> <p>7. MODERATOR TO GIVE SHOWCARD OF REGISTERED CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO PARTICIPANT. When did you use them? PROBE: Ascertain all the different sources used, when they used them. MAP ON DIARY.</p> <p>8. And what informal childcare provider(s) did you use? By informal, I mean any of types of childcare that are not registered with Ofsted. MODERATOR TO MAP OUT CHILDCARE USAGE ON THE DIARY</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: many parents may not regard family and friends as “childcare”, but basically any care which is not provided by the parents should be counted</p> <p>9. Have you ever used any childcare provided in connection with local charities or community organisations which support families with disabled children?</p> <p>10. Did you have to pay for this care? How much did you have to pay and over what period did the payments cover? How easy or difficult was it to find the money to cover these costs?</p> <p>11. [Did your use of childcare vary throughout the year? What prompted this? PROBE: Type of childcare used, also look at whether they had seasonal variations in childcare costs – this will be particularly relevant where there are children of school age in the household.</p> <p>FOR THOSE WITH NON-DISABLED CHILDREN:</p> <p>Were you using any childcare for your other children at this time? What did you use?</p> <p>NOTE TO MODERATOR: Most participants will not have been in employment prior to receiving HMRC’s offer of help towards their childcare costs. If they had not undertaken employment in 2009, ask about employment history in general, looking at when they were</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE – if participant has non-disabled children as well as a disabled child/ren, must ensure that you probe on their experiences of providing/ finding childcare for the disabled child/ren specifically.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Initial reaction of why they didn’t take up the offer, this will be examined in more detail later in the guide.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>last in sustainable employment (if applicable), what work they have undertaken in the past and the reasons why they were not in employment.</p> <p>MODERATOR TO RECAP WORK HISTORY AND CHILDCARE HISTORY WITH PARTICIPANT TO CLARIFY DETAILS:</p> <p><i>So, as I understand it...</i></p> <p>OUTLINE THEIR CURRENT WORK/CHILDCARE SITUATION,</p> <p><i>Between September and November 2009 you should have received a letter informing you that as a parent of a disabled child living in London you were eligible for extra help with your childcare costs if you were in paid employment for 16 hours or more per week.</i></p> <p>What were the reasons for you deciding, or not being able to take up this offer?</p> <p>IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED 16 HOURS OR MORE:</p> <p>What factors contributed to you deciding not to take up the offer of 80% of your childcare being paid for?</p> <p>PROBE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ don't remember receiving letter; ▪ decided wasn't interested; ▪ forgot about it; ▪ couldn't find childcare/childcare not available, ▪ providers unable to provide facilities or skills needed; ▪ providers equipped to provide suitable care are too far away; ▪ providers equipped to provide suitable care are too expensive; ▪ providers equipped to provide suitable for disabled child are unable to provide care 	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: For those that ARE currently employed but not partaking in the offer, try to press them on the reasons for this here. Especially if they had used childcare while working in the past.</p> <p>GROUP 4 – If interviewing group4, point out that they initially expressed an interest in the offer but were subsequently unable or unwilling to take this up, probe for the reasons for this.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: PROBE SENSITIVELY HERE – try to gauge their level of trust in childcare providers as well as perceptions around their ability to provide the care needed.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>for their other children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ providers unable to give the level of attention and tailored care needed; ▪ do not trust providers to provide the level of attention and tailored care they need; ▪ they are the best people to provide the attention and specialist care their child needs; ▪ child too young to be left; ▪ lack of information about suitable childcare providers ▪ no work available; ▪ didn't have time or found out too late. <p>READ TO PARTICIPANT: <i>In the following sections we will discuss further, the various factors that persuaded you not to take up the offer including, receiving the letter informing you about the offer and subsequently not taking this up, barriers to finding work, and barriers to finding suitable childcare arrangements.</i></p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: PROBE SENSITIVELY HERE – try to gauge whether confidence, cost or availability of suitable childcare is the main barrier.</p>
<p>Up to 20 mins</p>	<p><u>3. Journey to when they received the letter</u></p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: REFER BACK TO WORK DIARY HERE TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE RESPONDENT WAS IN EMPLOYMENT AT THE TIME THEY RECEIVED THE LETTER</p> <p>When you initially received the letter/heard about the offer you were/weren't in employment?</p> <p>IF YES: And you were employed as?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: This may have been recorded in the diary during the previous section, if so please confirm with them.</p> <p>IF NOT WORKING: Can you describe the reasons why you chose not to, or were unable to</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: In this section we are looking to find out the respondents situation when they received the letter and how this may have influenced their decision not to take up the offer. We are also looking to gauge any lifestyle factors, such as their general levels of organisation and their general attitudes to mail.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Do they pay much attention to things they get through the post? Do they get a</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>work at that time? (IF NOT DISCUSSED EARLIER)</p> <p>GENERAL ATTITUDE TO MAIL</p> <p>Do you remember receiving a letter offering you help towards childcare costs(Show respondent a copy of the letter if necessary)</p> <p>IF Yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you do when you received the letter? Did you read it straight away? Why/Why not? <p>ALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? • Who from? What are these letters usually about? <p>IF RECEIVE OTHER BENEFITS FROM DWP E.G. DLA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do any letters and calls that you have received about your other benefits compare to those you received about the childcare costs offer? <p>PROBE: Frequency of contact, tone and content of letters and phone calls, usefulness of information</p> <p>ALL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? • What do you normally do when you receive mail from the government, or government agencies? • Do you deal with it any differently to other mail? If YES – any particular reason for 	<p>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> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Are participants understanding the letter? Did they believe that they would receive up to £250 - £350 per week for childcare?</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IF NO: What do you do with it? Why? <p>SHOW RESPONDENT A COPY OF THE LETTER:</p> <p>Do you remember this letter? Can you remember roughly when you received it?</p> <p>What did you think of it? What was the main message you took from it (if any at all)?</p> <p>Did you trust that it was from who it said it was?</p> <p><i>Cognitive testing of letter – do they understand it? Tone? Trust issues?</i></p> <p>Did you know that any kind of help with childcare costs was available through tax credits was before receiving this letter? What did you think was available?</p> <p>PILOT ONLY</p> <p>What did you think about this special offer of help for parents of disabled children?</p> <p>The letter you received was from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, had you heard of them before?</p> <p>IF YES: – Where had you heard of them before? 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>Can you please describe in your own words what you think the letter is trying to tell you? MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY CONCEPTS LIKE FORMAL CHILDCARE.</p> <p>PROBE: Did you know it was about tax credits? And what do you understand about the tax credit system? What did you think you would have to do in order to be eligible for this support? And if you took up this offer, did you think it would cost you anything? What issues</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: Are respondents using the helpline? What do they think of the service, or are there any barriers to them calling the helpline for more information.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>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?</p> <p>To what extent do you trust the content of the letter – did you believe that if you took up work and childcare you would get up to £250 - £350 per week for [the name of the disabled child]’s childcare costs?</p> <p>IF NOT: Why not?</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>Did you have any doubts about your eligibility for support? Why do you say this? Where does this perception come from?</p> <p><u>COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:</u></p> <p>Thinking back to when you received this letter, did you call the helpline number on the letter?</p> <p>IF NO:</p> <p>Why not? What stopped you from doing this?</p> <p>Were you called by the helpline around the time you received the letter, or at a later date?</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <p>Did you register your interest in the scheme when you called/were called?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: ALL GROUP 3 RESPONDENTS WILL HAVE SAID THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO REGISTER AN INTEREST. ALL GROUP 4 RESPONDENTS WILL HAVE REGISTERED AN INTEREST.</p>	<p>NOTE ON OFFER: Families could receive up to £250 a week for one disabled child, £300 a week for one severely disabled child or £350 if they have two more children (only one needs to be disabled)</p> <p>WHAT ARE THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES WHO ARE SURPRISED AT BEING ELIGIBLE?</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>What factors did you consider when deciding whether to register your interest?</p> <p>Why did/didn't you register your interest at this point?</p> <p>PROBE:</p> <p>Group 3 – 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?</p> <p>Group 4 – Did you want help with your childcare costs? Did you want help in finding work? 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 encouraged you to register at this point? Why do you say this?</p> <p>What did you think of the advice and information you received from the helpline?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>PROMPT: Personal details? Childcare details? Employment details? Other?</p> <p>How could the phone contact you had with the helpline have been improved? What difference would this have made?</p> <p>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 easy or difficult to register your interest?</p> <p>IF CLAIM OTHER BENEFITS E.G. DLA ASK:</p> <p>How did you experience of this helpline compare to other govt. helplines you've used for</p>	<p>NOTE: People in Group 3 and 4 should have talked to the helpline.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>other benefits?</p> <p>PROBE: Attitude of staff, length of calls, usefulness of information</p> <p>What bearing did your phone conversation have on your decision to either register, or not register your interest to take up the offer of childcare? Why do you say this?</p>	
<p>Up to 20 mins</p>	<p>4. Barriers to finding work: ASK ONLY THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY OUT OF WORK</p> <p>Can I ask, are you currently looking for work? Why is this?</p> <p>IF YES PROBE: What kind of work are you looking for?</p> <p>How many hours would you like to work?</p> <p>How easy or difficult are you finding it to find a job like this? Why do you say that?</p> <p>ASK ALL: Do you think that working would have any impact on you personally? PROBE: Financially, emotionally, socially, learning new skills etc (NB: be very sensitive here, use discretion when probing). Why do you say that?</p> <p>IF WORKED PREVIOUSLY: Did you see any impact on you personally when you worked before? Why do you say that?</p> <p>And what about your family? Do you think there would be any impact on them if you were to take up work?</p> <p>PROBE: financial, emotional, social etc (NB: be sensitive when asking this). Why do you say this?</p> <p>What childcare arrangements would you make if you went to a job interview? Probe around formal and informal and possible costs</p> <p>IF WORKED PREVIOUSLY AFTER HAVING CHILDREN: Did you see any impact on your child(ren) when you used to work? Why/Why not? What sort of impact did you see?</p> <p>So taking in everything we've just talked about, would you take up work if you were</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: probe where the birth of the disabled child is the turning point – e.g. if their second child is disabled but they were able to fit work with childcare for their first, non-disabled child.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: To what extent is finding work the main barrier to them refusing the offer. We also want to look into whether the letter had any impact in their pursuit of work and what types of barriers exist for them in the pursuit of paid employment over 16 hours.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: PROBE SENSITIVELY</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>care they need; they are the best people to provide the attention and specialist care their child needs; child too young to be left; lack of information about suitable childcare providers; no work available; didn't have time or found out too late.</p> <p>PROBE: Why do you say this? What other factors were important in your decision? Which of these was the most important?</p> <p>BUDGETING EXERCISE:</p> <p><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 go back to work.</i></p> <p>Do you think there are any financial benefits to being in work for you / your family? In what way?</p> <p>PROBE: What would you need to earn to make it worthwhile? Why do you say this?</p> <p>Thinking back to the letter we were discussing, when you first heard about the offer did this encourage you to start to look for work? Why? Why not?</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <p>What about the offer made you look for work?</p> <p>What sort of work did you look for?</p> <p>Where did you look?</p> <p>PROBE: Jobcentre, Recruitment agencies, previous employers, increasing hours with current employer? Friends and family or other sources.</p> <p>Was this any different to how you have looked for work previously? Why was this?</p> <p>IF NO:</p> <p>Is there anything about the offer that could be changed to make your looking for work more of a practical option? PROBE: Would your circumstances need to be different? Would the offer itself need to be different? How?</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: Do budget setting exercise to determine whether they think they would be better off if they went to work and to what extent this cost factor is important for them when considering going back to work, or are other factors like being busy, or building a better life a bigger consideration.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>- the financial offer</p> <p>- help and advice in finding childcare suitable for the child's needs?</p> <p>- help and advice in finding work which fits with your responsibilities.</p> <p>How would this help?</p> <p>To what extent was finding work more of a barrier to taking up the offer than finding suitable childcare?</p> <p>PROBE: Was it a combination of both? Were there other factors involved? Which was the most important?</p> <p>PROBE: Explore fully the combination of finding compatible work and childcare as a barriers in more depth.</p>	
<p>Up to 10 mins</p>	<p><u>5. General experiences and perceptions of formal childcare</u></p> <p>MODERATOR: If participant has never looked for or used childcare for their disabled child then please ask questions in the following sections in terms of their perceptions of what they think using/ looking for childcare might be like.</p> <p>I'm now going to talk a little bit more about the sorts of childcare you have used in the past for [the name of disabled child], and how you feel about different types of childcare providers.</p> <p>MODERATOR: RECAP ON THEIR PAST/CURRENT USE OF CHILDCARE PROVIDERS FOR EACH OF THEIR CHILDREN</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>What, if any, have your experiences of using formal childcare providers been like in the past?</p> <p>PROMPT: How easy was it to arrange? To what extent did the provider fulfil the care needs</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: Explore general experiences and perceptions of formal childcare and identify the barriers to childcare for families with disabled children Handle this section sensitively.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Consider throughout here particularly the age of the disabled child with their disability – getting older might not mean more self-sufficiency for the child, and it might make finding childcare more challenging.</p> <p>Over time their childcare arrangements and situation may have changed, and it would be useful to get a track of this, e.g. they might have found it easier to find childcare for a three year old but not for an 11 year old with a disability. Alternatively some of the more recent legislation might have made things better than they were.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>of your child/ren? How did you find paying for this kind of childcare?</p> <p>Do you feel that finding suitable childcare for [name of disabled child] has been more easy or difficult at different times of their lives? When? Do you think it will be more easy or difficult when they are teenagers? Why?</p> <p>How do you feel about the idea of a formal provider – such as a nursery or childminder – taking care of [the name of disabled child] for you?</p> <p>PROMPT: Why do you say this? How does it compare to how you feel about your family or your friends looking after you children? Why do you say this, on balance, which do you prefer? Why?</p> <p>IF HAPPY WITH FORMAL CHILDCARE: Why do you say that? Are there particular childcare providers you are happy with, and others you are not so happy with? Which are these? Why do you say this?</p> <p>IF NOT HAPPY WITH FORMAL CHILDCARE: Why do you say that? Are there particular types of childcare providers you are unhappy with? Why do you say this?</p> <p>IF SAY THEY PREFER TO USE INFORMAL CARE (FAMILY/ FRIENDS) Probe fully around why this is? Cost? Trust? Think they can provide more tailored care? Convenience?</p> <p>IF SAY THEY FEEL THEY SHOULD BE LOOKING AFTER THEIR CHILD:</p> <p>Why do you say that?</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>Try to establish the extent of experience they have had in using childcare for their disabled child.</p> <p>We are trying to get a feel for whether their arrangements are out of choice or more out of necessity. Whether there are any barriers to their preferred method of childcare because of their child’s care needs. Please approach this sensitively.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: This needs particular sensitivity, especially if the child's disability is not going to lessen with age.</p>
<p>Up to 20 minutes</p>	<p><u>6. Accessibility and confidence in formal childcare</u></p> <p>Have you ever faced any difficulties in the past with finding suitable childcare for your child/children?</p> <p>PROMPT Can you talk me through these? How did they affect you?</p> <p>And what about your experiences of finding childcare providers for [the name of</p>	<p>MODERATOR: Explore the extent to which accessibility and confidence in providers are barriers to use of formal childcare.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>disabled child]?</p> <p>PROMPT IF DIFFICULT: When has it been difficult? Is it all the time, or during a certain period in the past? What made it difficult?</p> <p>PROMPT IF EASY: When has it been easy? Is it all the time, or during a certain period in the past? What made it easy?</p> <p>How confident do you feel about childcare providers being able to provide [name of disabled child] with the care they need?</p> <p>PROMPT: Skills of staff? Attitude of staff? Facilities in centre? Why do you say that – personal experience, word of mouth from other parents?</p> <p>How would you describe the attitude of the childcare providers you have contacted when looking for care for [name of disabled child]</p> <p>PROMPT: Helpful? Friendly? Reassuring? Did this affect your decision to use them?</p> <p>Has a childcare provider ever told you that they were unable to care for [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>IF YES: Was it a private or a local authority provider? What reasons did they give you for this? How did it make you feel?</p> <p>Has a childcare provider ever told you that they would need to make adjustments (physical, new staff, staff training etc) to their centre to be able to provide care for [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>IF YES: What adjustments did they need to make? How did they communicate this to you? What was the outcome?</p> <p>IF NO: Do you think a provider would do this if necessary? Why do you say that?</p> <p>Do you think there are enough places available in childcare providers that can provide the facilities and care for [the name of disabled child] needs in your local area?</p> <p>PROMPT IF NO: Has this caused problems in finding a childcare provider? Why/why not?</p> <p>PROMPT IF YES: Why did they think that? Try to ascertain whether this is based on experience or perception.</p>	<p>Try to ascertain whether the participants' views are based on their experience or their perceptions of formal childcare. If based on perceptions please establish what these are based on / informed by.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>FOR THOSE WITH NON-DISABLED CHILDREN:</p> <p>Have you, or would you want to use the same provider for all of your children?</p> <p>PROMPT: Why do you say that? What would the benefits be? Would there be any drawbacks? Has not being able to do this affected your decision to use childcare?</p> <p>Are there any times of year when you feel it is particularly difficult to find care for [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>PROMPT: When is that? School holidays? After school? Weekends? What impact does this have on your decision to use to?</p> <p>Do you feel that there is enough choice of different activities to take part in through childcare providers for [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>IF YES: What activities have you used?</p> <p>IF NO: What activities would you like to have access to?</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>Where have you found information on childcare? Sure Start Children’s Centre, online, FIS, word of mouth, charity organisation and so on.</p> <p>IF THEY SAY THEY HAVE USED THE FIS:</p> <p>What information did Family Information Service (FIS) give you?</p> <p>IF YES: Were they helpful? Did you trust their information? Was this followed up with further calls or face to face contact?</p> <p>Do you know of any other local networks or support groups who provide help and information about childcare to parents with disabled children?</p> <p>PROBE: have you ever used them? Why/ why not? IF SO, PROBE AROUND THEIR EXPERIENCE OF DOING THIS</p>	<p>MODERATOR: Try to gauge level and frequency of contact as well as depth of information provided by FIS</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE:IF THE PARTICPANT WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THEIR LOCAL FIS PLEASE PROVIDE THEM WITH THE PHONE NUMBER FOR THEIR LOCAL FIS – A FULL LIST IS INCLUDED IN THE MODERATOR PACK.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>What do you consider to be a reasonable distance to travel to a provider that has the facilities and skills to provide specialist care for your child? Is this how far you currently travel to reach your childcare provider?</p> <p>How would you travel to and from a childcare provider with [name of disabled child]? PROMPT: Walk? Car? Public transport? Taxi? Do you know what the additional cost of this might be? What impact would this have?</p> <p>How easy do you find it to use [mode of transport] to travel to your childcare provider? PROBE: Does the mode of transport have any impact on the provider they decide to use? If there are additional costs, is this a factor in choosing a childcare provider?</p> <p>Where do you normally go for information on what support or benefits you might be entitled to? PROMPT: Job Centre? FIS? CAB? Charities, SSCC, Other professional – e.g. Drs, health visitors, social workers and so on.</p> <p>Do you know what support or benefits that either you or [name of disabled child] might be eligible for to help towards childcare costs? PROMPT: Which ones? Have you ever claimed for help with childcare costs? Why/ Why not? How do you find making claims for benefits?</p> <p>MODERATOR: refer back to list of benefits they claim and discuss each in turn PROMPT: Easy? Difficult? Why?</p> <p>Are there any other factors which we haven't covered which have made it difficult for you to find suitable childcare? PROBE: What were these? Why were they important?</p> <p>GROUP 3 ONLY</p> <p>To what extent were barriers to finding suitable childcare the main factor in you deciding not to take up the offer of help with your childcare? PROBE: Why do you say this? What other factors were important in your decision? Which of these was the most important?</p>	<p>MODERATOR: Use prompt card of list of benefits if needed.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>GROUP 4 ONLY:</p> <p>After registering your interest with the helpline, to what extent were barriers to finding suitable childcare the main reason behind you deciding not to/or being unable to take up the offer?</p> <p>PROBE: Why do you say this? What other factors were important in your decision? Which of these was the most important?</p>	
5-10 mins	<p><u>8. 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 was the main reason for you deciding against taking up the offer of extra help? • 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. 	<p>This section will draw out the key messages and brings the interview to a close.</p>

Appendix A – Financial Diary

Use this to help participants plan their incomings and outgoings:

Weekly income and outgoings

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

Appendix B – Diary

Monthly income and outgoings

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							

Appendix B – Diaries for transition to work/ childcare costs

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

HMRC/DfE

Families' experiences and behaviour in the Childcare Affordability Pilots (CAP09)**Discussion Guide – FINAL (01/10/10)****Disabled Children's Pilot – Take-up group - EXTENDED****Objectives of the Disabled Children's pilot:**

The aim of the Disabled Children's pilot is to test whether increasing the childcare cost limits (but maintaining support at 80% of costs) for families with disabled children, increases the number of such parents entering sustainable employment and taking up formal childcare. These higher limits are £250 for one disabled child, £300 for one severely disabled child and £350 for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled. This study is important and will help HM Revenue & Customs and the Department for Education better understand the needs and experiences of parents of disabled children.

A total of 50 interviews will be conducted for this study, around 20 interviews will be with customers in the Control group who were offered 80% costs with the current limits (£175 for one child and £300 for two or more children), and around 30 interviews will be with customers in the Pilot group who were offered 80% costs with higher limits (£250 for one disabled child, £300 for one severely disabled child and £350 for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled). In addition to this, each participant will belong to one of the following groups²:

- Group 3: Families who have been in contact with *Spoken For* but said they did not want to register an interest;
- Group 4: Families who have registered an interest but did not find work and childcare before the pilot closed in April 2010;
- **Group 5: Families who registered an interest and have subsequently found work and childcare.**

The objective of these interviews is to understand the reasons for customers in Group 5 choosing to take part in the Childcare Affordability Programme. A maximum of 21 interviews will be conducted for Group 5.

Specific objectives are as follows:

- To explore customers' reasons for interest in the pilot;
- To explore their experiences of moving into work and childcare and the importance of the extra help with childcare costs in their decision to do so;
- To explore their experiences and behaviour during the pilot in terms of changes to their working status and hours, and changes in their use of childcare;
- To explore other triggers to moving into employment and taking up childcare which are not associated with affordability.
- To explore what kind of mix (formal/informal) parents are using, and their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of each.

Objectives of the DfE extended interviews

The aim of the project extension of the Disabled Children's pilot is to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents of disabled children in finding and using childcare for their disabled children and examine the extent to which affordability and accessibility are barriers to using childcare.

These extended interviews are being undertaken with 6 people who received notification of the pilot offer (up to 80% costs with higher limits of £250 for one disabled child, £300 for one severely disabled child and £350 for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled) and subsequently took up the offer, as well as

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.

with 4 people who received notification of the control offer (up to 80% costs with the current limits of £175 for one child and £300 for two or more children) and subsequently took up the offer.

Specific objectives are as follows:

- To explore parents' perceptions of the degree to which cost is a barrier to take-up of childcare including:
 - Financial limitations - knowledge of benefits including what entitled to and how to claim
 - Whether childcare providers charge more for care of disabled children
 - Whether cost of transport is a barrier to use of childcare
- To explore parents' level of confidence in providers (particularly with children with complex needs) and possible attitudinal barriers on part of some providers/parents.
- To explore parents' perceptions and experiences of availability and level of flexibility of appropriate childcare including:-
 - Siblings being able to access childcare with same provider
 - Possible shortfall in holiday and/or leisure activities
 - How they access information on childcare (including their knowledge, and use of, Family Information Service (FIS)).

Further information:

- We will conduct paired-depth interviews with couples where appropriate;
- All pilot interviews will be held in London between 11th October and 19th November 2010
- All control interviews will be held in the West Midlands between 11th October and 19th November 2010
- Each interview/depth to last approximately between one hour and ninety minutes and two hours.

Notes	Guide Sections	Guide Timings
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. Transition into employment	This section explores how the participant made the transition into employment. It looks at the triggers and barriers to employment, as well as the difference made by the offer. This section will also explore how they went about looking for work and whether they had all the help and support they needed at this stage.	Up to 25 minutes
3 Finding Childcare	This section examines how they chose a form of childcare which suited their needs and met the conditions of the offer	Up to 20 minutes
4. Task – Childcare Mapping	This task aims to identify all types of childcare previously or currently used and how and when they are used. This task will provide a visual aid to the interviewer to draw on in the latter sections as well as providing a change of pace for the participant.	Up to 20 minutes
5. Paying for Childcare	Through the use of budgeting exercises, we will look at how they pay for childcare and the difference that the offer has made in this regard.	Up to 15 minutes
6. Interest in the offer	This section of the guide will look at their reactions to the initial letter, and what it was that attracted them to the offer. It will also examine the steps they took as a result of receiving the letter and how they found dealing with the Childcare Affordability Pilot Helpline (which is run by <i>Spoken For.</i>).	Up to 15 minutes
7. Making a claim	This section examines their experiences from the moment their case was transferred from <i>Spoken For</i> to TCO (even though they may not be aware of this transfer themselves). We will discuss how they found making a claim for childcare support, and how easy it was for them to provide HMRC with the information they needed. We will also look at what others sources of help and support they need at this stage.	Up to 15 minutes
8. Conclusion and Thanks	A summary of the conversation	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 = 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 from the moderator
How long it takes	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	

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
5 mins	<p><u>1. Welcome and introduction</u></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 • Confidentiality: reassure all responses anonymous and that information about individuals will not be passed on to anyone, including back to 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 extra help towards childcare costs, which allows you to claim up to 80% of your childcare costs with limits of £250-£350 per week?</p> <p>CONTROL RECRUITMENT CHECK I believe you have recently started to claim help towards childcare costs, which allows you to claim up to 80% of your childcare costs with limits of £175-£300 per week?</p> <p>MODERATOR: The exact amount received relates to the number of children in the family and severity of the child’s disability</p> <p><u>Personal Background</u></p> <p>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. Outlines the ‘rules’ of the interview (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines).</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> <p>If a paired depth, ask these questions to both participants.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Fine to mention HMRC at this stage. However, please do not mention the alternative limits of payment to participants</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: only three of the pilot take-up families are claiming up to the maximum the pilot offers. Also Some families may already have had their 12 months on the pilot and be off of it.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Particularly important to get the age of the disabled child – the childcare available for a 3 year old child with complex needs may vary considerably from after school or holiday childcare for a 13 year old with complex needs.</p> <p>If a paired depth, ask these questions to both</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can I just check how many children do you have and <u>how old are they?</u> - Does anyone else live with you in the household? - I understand that you have a disabled child/ren, is that right? Can you tell me a little bit about them? <p>Moderator: sensitively probe on the type of disability/ disabilities the child/ren have and what specialist care they may require/their names/ age/what does the mentioned disability mean to the child/ how does it affect his/her day-to-day activities?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Try to get an understanding of what specialist care their child needs because of their disability but do so sensitively. After this point also try to refer to the disabled child by name rather than ‘disabled’</p> <p>And can you describe the work that you do at the moment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How long have you been doing that job? What did you do before this job? - How are you finding your work? - NOTE TO MODERATOR: JUST GET TOP LEVEL VIEWS HERE – THE TRANSITION INTO EMPLOYMENT WILL BE EXPLORED IN MORE DETAIL LATER IN THE GUIDE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT NOT ALL PARTICIPANTS WILL CURRENTLY BE IN WORK, HAVING LEFT EMPLOYMENT SINCE JOINING THE PILOT/CONTROL SCHEME. WE WILL EXPLORE THE REASONS FOR THIS IN THE FOLLOWING SECTION. <p>Does anyone else live with you? PROBE: Partner, another family member, friends.</p> <p>If APPLICABLE: What about other people in your household, can you tell me any work that they do?</p> <p>What benefits or tax credits, 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>MODERATOR: USE SHOWCARD A LISTING BENEFITS</p> <p>And how long have you been receiving each of these?</p>	<p>participants.</p> <p>MODERATOR: please note that disability is not the same as poor health or illness, although there may be some overlap.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: The pilot group may have previously claimed or currently claim (for children who are not disabled) the standard help towards childcare costs through the tax credits system. Please clarify that we are talking about the special offer of help for parents of disabled children.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please note that for the purposes of the pilot, working less than 16 hours a week will count as being unemployed, Please be aware that participants working less than 16 hours a week are likely to consider themselves employed.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: We are primarily interested in the participant and their partner, but if others in the household contribute in some way financially that is also of some, but limited interest.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
<p>Up to 25 mins</p>	<p><u>2. Transition into employment</u></p> <p>I'd like to start by looking at the work that you did in 2009 before you started to claim for childcare costs. I've got a diary here to help us map out what you did over the year?</p> <p>MODERATOR TO USE THE DIARY IN APPENDICES.</p> <p>NOTE TO MODERATOR: If conducting a paired depth, complete diary for both participants. However, please focus on the detailed experiences of the partner who has most recently made the transition to employment.</p> <p>Starting from January last year, please tell me about any work that you have undertaken since then, up until the present day?</p> <p>Try to go chronologically, by month, probing with the following questions:</p> <p>12. Was this work permanent, temporary or casual?</p> <p>13. What kind of work were you doing? PROBE: Role, skill level, sector and location (in relation to proximity to the home).</p> <p>14. What were your working hours? Did you have regular working hours, or did your working hours change regularly?</p> <p>15. IF MOVED JOB/LEFT EMPLOYMENT: Why was this? PROBE FULLY TO ASCERTAIN THE EXTENT TO WHICH CHILDCARE WAS A FACTOR.</p> <p>MODERATOR: ENSURE THAT THE FOCUS OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IS ON THE NEEDS AND CARE OF THE DISABLED CHILD/ CHILDREN</p> <p>PROBE SENSITIVELY: Were the care needs of your [name of disabled child/ren] at all related to you leaving your job? Try to uncover the circumstances around this</p> <p>16. ASK IF APPLICABLE (DEPENDING ON HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, AGE OF CHILDREN). How did you manage to balance working with looking after your disabled children? Who looked after them when you were in work? PROBE FULLY FOR ALL SOURCES OF CHILDCARE – FORMAL AND INFORMAL.</p> <p>17. What formal childcare provider(s) did you use? By formal childcare providers I mean those who are registered with Ofsted and have an official Ofsted</p>	<p>Try and get as much detail as possible – it may be that people move in and out of work and we need to capture these variations along with the reasons for them.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Bear in mind that the majority of people interviewed are likely to have been out-of-work until they joined the pilot. Recall that letters were sent to families where at least one partner was out-of-work.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: a few interviewees may have taken up work but since ceased. For these, it is the job that they took up that made them eligible for the pilot that we are most interested in. If they ceased that job and have taken up another by the time of interview, it would be useful to pick this up as well - expect it will be as the diary is completed.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE – if participant has non-disabled children as well as a disabled child/ren, ensure that you probe on their experiences of providing/ finding childcare for the disabled child/ren specifically but also try to find out how this fit in with other childcare arrangements</p> <p>MAY NEED TO PROBE HERE: many parents may not regard family and friends as “childcare”, but basically any care which is not provided by the</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>number (i.e. the providers that you are required to use to qualify for the assistance provided by HMRC) and nannies.</p> <p>18. MODERATOR TO GIVE SHOWCARD OF REGISTERED CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO PARTICIPANT. When did you use them? PROBE: Ascertain all the different sources used, when they used them. MAP ON DIARY.</p> <p>19. And what informal childcare provider(s) did you use? By informal, I mean any of types of childcare that are not registered with Ofsted. MODERATOR TO MAP OUT CHILDCARE USAGE ON THE DIARY</p> <p>20. Did you ever use any childcare provided in connection with local charities or community organisations which support families with disabled children?</p> <p>21. Did you have to pay for this care? How much did you have to pay and over what period did the payments cover? How easy or difficult was it to find the money to cover these costs?</p> <p>22. [Did your use of childcare vary throughout the year? What prompted this? PROBE: Type of childcare used, also look at whether they had seasonal variations in childcare costs – this will be particularly relevant where there are children of school age in the household.</p> <p>FOR THOSE WITH NON-DISABLED CHILDREN:</p> <p>Were you using any childcare for your other children at this time? What did you use?</p> <p>NOTE TO MODERATOR: Most participants will not have been in employment prior to accepting HMRC’s offer of help towards their childcare costs. If they had not undertaken employment in 2009, ask about employment history in general, looking at when they were last in sustainable employment (if applicable), what work they have undertaken in the past and the reasons why they were not in employment.</p> <p>MODERATOR TO RECAP WORK HISTORY WITH PARTICIPANT TO CLARIFY DETAILS:</p> <p>So, as I understand it, after receiving the offer of help, you took up a position of paid employment for 16 hours or more per week. What made you decide to look for this work/increase the hours that you worked?</p> <p>Was the age of your child/ children a factor in going back to work? PROBE: Try to</p>	<p>parents should be counted</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE – need to unpick the barriers to employment so we can work out the extent to which the offer has helped to overcome these.</p> <p>Look at seasonal variations in childcare costs – this will be useful contextual information.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE – we really need to get a lot of detail on the triggers for their move into employment and whether childcare affordability was a priority.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: some take-up families have since fallen out of work / childcare and so are suspended from the pilot until they are back in both.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>uncover how old the participant’s child/ children were when they felt comfortable leaving them in formal childcare and going to back to work and whether this was in any way related to the child’s disability and care needs.</p> <p>IF MENTION THE OFFER: And was this the main factor in your decision to look for work, or were other factors more important? Why was this? PROBE: See how important this was in relation to other factors which drove them to look for work.</p> <p>IF DID NOT MENTION THE OFFER: And how far did the offer of the financial support that you have taken up affect your decision? PROBE: See how important this was in relation to other factors which drove them to look for work.</p> <p>ASK ALL:</p> <p>I’d like you to talk to me in a bit more detail about how you found the job you took which meant you could take up the offer of extra help with childcare costs. 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>IF ALREADY WORKING PRIOR TO HMRC’S OFFER: And when did you decide to increase your hours? Why did you decide to increase your hours then?</p> <p>IF UNEMPLOYED PRIOR TO HMRC’S OFFER: When did you start looking for work? PROBE: Why did you start looking then?</p> <p>SHOW THE LETTER: Do you remember receiving this? Did you start looking for work before/after you received this letter? PROBE: Why was this?</p> <p>Did you also receive a telephone call about the offer? IF YES: Who was this from? Did you start looking for work before/after you received this call? PROBE: Why was this? ASK ALL</p> <p>What kind of work were you originally looking for? Why was this? PROBE: Determine whether they had experience in this kind of role, were interested in this type of work, or whether they thought that jobs of this nature would fit with childcare responsibilities.</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: Participants may have been working for less than 16 hours per week, prior to joining the scheme. Therefore, they may simply have increased their hours to become eligible for assistance. Where this is the case, please probe fully on reasons behind their decision to increase their hours and how they went about doing so.</p> <p>MODERATOR: Try to ascertain the importance of the extra money from the pilot offer made any difference to incentivising them. However, handle this carefully as only 3 families are claiming more than they could under the standard system.</p> <p>Moderator note – the sources of help they use may well vary depending on the household composition so do bear this in mind. For instance, lone parents may well turn to Lone Parent Advisors. BME groups may also use community groups to access help if</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>ALSO PROBE: If applicable, depending on their job search start date ask whether the kind of work or the number of hours they were looking for changed on receiving the offer of help.</p> <p>How did you go about looking for work, what kind of places did you look for information? PROBE: Explore all the different sources used including Jobcentre Plus, local newspapers, internet and jobsearch sites, informal contacts, recruitment agencies. For each look at how useful they were.</p> <p>To what extent did you find all the information you needed when looking for work? What kind of information was most helpful to you? PROBE: Why do you say this? What difference did this information make to your job search? And what other information would you have liked? PROBE: Why do you say this? What difference would this have made to you? Was word-of-mouth a factor? How?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: In the questions on information, try and pull out whether they had access to information on issues related to their job search e.g. specialist childcare providers for their disabled children, costs of childcare, up/re-skilling and so on.</p> <p>How long did it take you to find work? PROBE: Ask about the number of positions applied for, how easy it was for them to find suitable vacancies, childcare arrangements while they attended interviews; how easy was it to find employers with family friendly policies, whether they turned down any successful applications, and why? Was it related to childcare?</p> <p>And how did you feel about going into employment? PROBE: Ask sensitively about the emotional impact of their transition into employment, whether they felt nervous, lacked confidence, worried about disabled childcare and so on.</p> <p>What difference has being in work made to you? And to your family? PROBE: Explore this issue fully – examine the impact it has had on them financially, emotionally, socially, the amount of time they spend together as a family, what they do in that time, how it might affect their children’s aspirations etc. Please also identify what, if any, immediate impact there has been on their children.</p> <p>Is your employer aware of the care needs of [name of child]?</p> <p>IF YES PROBE: Have you been supported by your employer? In what way has your employer supported you? Why do you say that? PROBE: Explore whether the employer has</p>	<p>their first language is not English in particular. In addition, other support groups for parents of disabled children.</p> <p>Moderator note – ask sensitively, as we will be looking at personal values/beliefs here about family involvement, the importance of work versus childcare etc.</p> <p>Moderator note: Remember that when talking about the impact of work, the participant may discuss negative affects – allow space for this.</p> <p>Moderator note: people may move in and out of employment – phrase the questions according to status.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>(if necessary) offered flexible working hours, whether any extra support has been given etc.</p> <p>Was this important in your choice of employer? Why/why not? Why do you say that?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: It may be that we speak with people who are on the pilot but move in and out of employment. If the participant is <i>out of work</i> at the time of the interview ask the following:</p> <p>What are the 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? Do you think you will go back into work in the near future? PROBE: Why do you say this? What will be the factors that will support this move?</p>	<p>Moderator: try to gauge how important the attitudes of the employer towards childcare arrangements is in choosing to go back into work.</p>
<p>Up to 20 mins</p>	<p><u>3. Finding Childcare</u></p> <p>I'd now like to ask you some questions about your experience of using childcare for [name of the disabled child]</p> <p>Were you already using childcare before you started work?</p> <p>If YES OR NO – How did you find your current provider (this may be through FIS, word of mouth)</p> <p>What did this move into work mean for your childcare arrangements? What childcare providers do/did you use? When do/did you use them? PROBE: Ascertain all the different sources used, when they use them, if frequency changed.</p> <p>What different factors did you consider when choosing a childcare provider?</p> <p>PROMPT: What did you feel was essential? What did you feel was nice to have but not essential?</p> <p>When you began looking, how did you feel about the idea of a formal provider taking care of [the name of disabled child] for you?</p> <p>PROMPT: Why is that?</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: ASK QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION SENSITIVELY Try to ascertain the participant's confidence in childcare provider, the flexibility of the provider and the affordability of childcare for their disabled child.</p> <p>Moderator note – refer back to the diary as much as possible so we can get a detailed picture of how their use of childcare has changed and the extent to which the offer was a driver of this.</p> <p>If participant has subsequently left employment, please amend the tense of the questions accordingly.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE; Participants may have different arrangements for different children – please record for all, and try to uncover differences in attitudes or approach between finding care for their different children and whether these differences were through choice or</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>Do you think there are enough places available in childcare providers that can provide the facilities and care [the name of disabled child] needs in your local area?</p> <p>PROMPT IF NO: Has this caused problems in finding a childcare provider? Why/why not?</p> <p>PROMPT IF YES: Why did they think that? Try to ascertain whether this is based on experience or perception.</p> <p>Do you feel that finding suitable childcare for [name of disabled child] has been more easy or difficult at different times of their lives? When? Do you think it will be more easy or difficult when they are teenagers? Why?</p> <p>Are there any times of year when you feel it is particularly difficult to find care for [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>PROMPT: When is that? School holidays? Weekends? What impact does this have on your decision to use to?</p> <p>Do you feel that there is enough choice of different activities to take part in through childcare providers for [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>IF YES: What activities have you used?</p> <p>IF NO: What activities would you like to have access to?</p> <p>How do you think the cost of childcare for disabled children compares with care for non-disabled children?</p> <p>PROMPT: More expensive? Less? The same? Why?</p> <p>To what extent do you think that childcare for disabled children are generally affordable? Why do you say this?</p> <p>PROMPT: 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> <p>Have you ever been told by a provider that the cost of caring for [name of disabled child] would be higher because of their care needs?</p> <p>IF YES: How much more did they tell you it would cost? How did they explain this extra cost</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: One of the areas this pilot may highlight is if higher limits of costs are paid, the parent may be less inclined to seek competitively priced childcare. Please note any relevant responses.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>to you? Did this affect your decision to use them? IF NO: Do you think this might happen? Why?</p> <p>Does the cost of childcare for [name of disabled child] remain constant throughout the year, or does it vary? Why is this the case?</p> <p>PROBE: during the summer holidays, Christmas period, seasonal work etc.</p> <p>How do you feel about having childcare support spread out across the year so you get the same amount each month although this may be more or less than you need at certain times of the year?</p> <p>PROBE: Try to ascertain whether they understand how this system works and whether they have problems with calculating their average costs or budgeting for times when costs will be higher e.g. school holidays</p> <p>How would you travel to and from a childcare provider with [name of disabled child]?</p> <p>PROMPT: Walk? Car? Public transport? Taxi? What is the additional cost of this ? What impact does this have?</p> <p>How easy do you find it to use [mode of transport] to travel to your childcare provider?</p> <p>PROBE: Does the mode of transport have any impact on the provider they decide to use? If there are additional costs, is this a factor in choosing a childcare provider?</p> <p>Where did you get information on different providers who care for disabled children? Which was the most useful? Did you seek advice from any local community organisations or charities?</p> <p>And how do/did you feel about these source/s? PROBE: Other research has shown that there can be a lack of trust around more formal providers – see if this is an issue, as well as looking at more logistical and practical issues such as whether the help offered suits their work. I'd like to talk about the different childcare providers that you currently use for [the name of the disabled child].</p> <p>What was it that made you choose the childcare provider that you did? What degree of choice do you feel you had? Why was that? How many providers did you consider before choosing one?</p>	

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>Where have you found information on childcare? Sure Start Children’s Centre, online, FIS, word of mouth, charity organisation and so on.</p> <p>IF THEY SAY THEY HAVE USED THE FIS:</p> <p>What information did Family Information Service (FIS) give you?</p> <p>IF YES: Were they helpful? Did you trust their information? Was this followed up with further calls or face to face contact?</p> <p>Do you know of any other local networks or support groups who provide help and information about childcare to parents with disabled children?</p> <p>PROBE: have you ever used them? Why/ why not? IF SO, PROBE AROUND THEIR EXPERIENCE OF DOING THIS</p> <p>MODERATOR TO GIVE SHOWCARD B OF CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO PARTICIPANT</p> <p>Which of the different kinds of childcare provider(s) shown on this card do you use now? For which of these do you claim financial assistance from HMRC? When do you use them? PROBE: Ascertain all the different sources used, when they use them.</p> <p>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>Up to 20 minutes</p>	<p><u>4. Task – Childcare Mapping</u></p> <p><u>(a) MAPPING EXERCISE</u></p> <p><u>I would now like us to do a short task together so that I can get a sense of how your childcare and work 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.</u></p> <p><u>ASK PARTICIPANT FOR STREETNAMES AND/OR POSTCODES OF:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Their home</u> ▪ <u>Their workplace(s)</u> 	<p>This task aims to identify all types of childcare previously or currently used and how and when they are used. This task will provide a visual aid to the interviewer to draw on in the latter sections as well as providing a change of pace for the participant.</p> <p>MODERATOR: work with participant to draw the map using pack provided containing paper, markers and stickers.</p> <p>MODERATOR: Try to gain an understanding of how work and childcare fit together and the impact</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>All types of formal childcare used</u> ▪ <u>All types of informal childcare used</u> ▪ <u>Family and friends who support them</u> ▪ <u>Any other forms of schooling/ activities used for the child</u> <p><u>IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE CHILD IN THE FAMILY, PLEASE REPEAT PROBES RELATING TO CHILDCARE/ ACTIVITIES FOR SECOND CHILD/ OTHER CHILDREN</u></p> <p><u>Do you know if there are any other places locally you could pay for [the name of disabled child] to be cared for? PLEASE REFER TO ANY CHILDCARE PROVIDERS WHICH MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN MENTIONED</u></p> <p><u>Where are they located? MODERATOR TO MARK ON MAP Are they hard to get to? If so, why?</u></p> <p><u>How do you travel between all these locations? Are there any places that are particularly difficult to travel to? Why? Are there any times of the day you find it more difficult to get to certain places? Why?</u></p> <p><u>IF USE A CAR</u></p> <p><u>How do manage the cost of your car? Is it difficult to do so? If so, why?</u></p> <p><u>IF USE OTHER TRANSPORT</u></p> <p><u>How much does each journey cost you? Is this difficult to manage? If so, why?</u></p> <p><u>Do you ever use childcare other than when you're at work? PROBE: When is this? What type of childcare do you use?</u></p> <p><u>Overall how easy or difficult do/did 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?</u></p>	<p>this has had on the family.</p> <p>MODERATOR: Do not include details of Short Breaks care which the family may use.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Informal care may less common for these participants as the level of care may be more demanding – try to find out if this has been an issue or concern</p> <p>Moderator note – probe fully here so we can see whether there is a split between formal and informal costs e.g. they may get a neighbour to look after their children for a couple of hours and pay for this – though it would still be informal.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>Has there been a time when [the name of the disabled child] has had to leave childcare during the day for any reason, such as illness?</p> <p>PROBE FULLY: What did you do in this situation? How did the childcare provider handle this situation? Ascertain whether they have informal systems of support in place they can rely on when needed, and if not, how supportive their employer was?</p> <p><u>(b) TIMELINE EXERCISE</u></p> <p><u>I'd now like to find out a bit more about how you use childcare over the year, using a timeline to help me. Please could you tell which of your informal and formal childcare providers you use at different times of the year? MODERATOR AND PARTICIPANT TO WORK TOGETHER TO MARK OUT USE OF DIFFERENT PROVIDERS OVER THE YEAR ON TIMELINE</u></p> <p><u>What about activities for [the name of disabled child]? MODERATOR AND PARTICIPANT TO MARK OUT USE OF ACTIVITIES OVER THE YEAR ON TIMELINE</u></p> <p><u>Are any times of the year difficult to get childcare or find activities for [the name of disabled child]? When? How do you manage during this period?</u></p>	
<p>Up to 15 minutes</p>	<p><u>5. Paying for Childcare</u></p> <p>I'd now like to just talk through with you how you pay(ed) for your childcare. To help us do this, can you describe your weekly or monthly income and outgoings?</p> <p>MODERATOR TO USE BUDGETTING TABLES IN THE APPENDICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What different sources of income do you rely on? How much do these amount to per week/month? PROBE: Look at all income sources used including salary, benefits and credits, loans, informal help from friends/family, credit cards and so on. - FOR EACH SOURCE OF INCOME: What do you use this for? MODERATOR TO EXPLORE WHETHER PARTICIPANTS "RING FENCE" CERTAIN INCOME TO SPECIFIC PURPOSES, - And what other outgoings do you have each week/month? PROBE: Look at all 	<p>MODERATOR: please ask these questions about participants' attitudes to personal finances and debt sensitively.</p> <p>These questions explore the participants' level of adeptness in financial management.</p> <p>MODERATOR: Some of these families will have come off the pilot by the time they are interviewed as they will already have been on it 12 months. If this is the case, please explore the financial impact of this, if any.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>the different outgoings including rent/mortgage, food, utilities, travel, childcare, healthcare costs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How easy is it for you to cover these? Which of these outgoings are priorities? Why do you say this? And which of these outgoings can you do without if needed? How do you pay for each of these outgoings? PROBE: look at whether certain payments are covered by loans, credit etc. - To what extent do this incomings and outgoings vary each week/month? - MODERATOR NOTE: If not mentioned childcare costs in their outgoings please probe on each of the following for both their disabled child/ren and their other non-disabled children : IF OUT OF WORK: Do you currently have any childcare costs for any of your children? IF IN WORK: What childcare costs do you have? How much are these? PROBE – Do you pay for different sources? Which ones? How much are these? - Do you ever need to pay extra to cover the costs of the care [name] needs due to their disability? How much is this? When do you need to pay for this? How do you budget for this payment - Have you always had these childcare costs? How did you used to pay for them? - IF EVER USED CHILDCARE IN THE PAST: How easy or difficult do/did you find it to keep track of your childcare costs? - To what extent did you childcare costs vary each week/month? And to what extent do you expect your childcare costs to vary in the coming year? - What difference has being in work made to how easily you are able to budget? Why do you say this? <p>Can you describe how you monitor your incomings and outgoings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you do to keep track of your income and manage your finances? PROMPTS COULD INCLUDE: keeping records of weekly/ monthly costs, keeping bills, keeping a budget sheet. - Who in the household keeps a track on spending? Who is responsible for different transactions? PROBE FULLY TO ASCERTAIN WHO IN THE HOUSEHOLD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHILDCARE PAYMENTS AND WHO DOES THE TAX CREDITS PAPERWORK. - How easy or difficult do you find it to know what your incomings/outgoings are? 	<p>These questions explore the participants' experience of debt, and also their level of aversion to debt.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: these questions about debt are background context, rather than the main focus of the discussion. However, any difference between costs of childcare for a disabled and a non-</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>difference has this made to you/your family and [the name of the disabled child]?</p> <p>Was this any different to how you organised payment for childcare for your other children? How?</p>	
<p>Up to 15 mins</p>	<p>6. Interest in the offer</p> <p>I'd now like to talk a bit more about your decision to take up the offer of assistance towards the cost of childcare.</p> <p>Just to confirm, did you hear about the offer of assistance through a letter, or thorough any other means? IF APPROPRIATE, PROMPT: telephone call from SpokenFor (although note that the participant will not know this agency by name).</p> <p>Prior to receiving the offer 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>IF NOT MENTIONED:</p> <p>Have you ever received information about possible financial assistance from local community groups, charities, Jobcentre or from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for instance? How useful was this?</p> <p>Why had you not applied for this assistance in the past?</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 are aware of Sure Start, any for their child's specific disability, Lone Parent Advisors (if applicable)</p> <p>SHOW INITIAL INVITATION LETTER FROM DCSF</p> <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 YES: Who did you show it to / discuss it with? IF COUPLE: Did you mention the letter to your partner? Did you discuss the letter with them?</p> <p>Could you tell me in your own words what you understood this letter/ telephone call was trying to tell you? PROBE FULLY TO ASCERTAIN THE EXTENT TO WHICH</p>	<p>This section looks at the importance of the offer in their decision to move into work and take up childcare.</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> <p>Prior to the offer, the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit was the same for disabled and non-disabled children.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>CUSTOMERS UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE PACKAGE OF HELP BEING OFFERED TO THEM WOULD WAS and how this differs from the current tax credits system (in the case of the pilot group).</p> <p>Was there anything in the letter that you were unsure of? Did you know what was meant by terms like ‘formal childcare’</p> <p>PROBE: (Where appropriate): Did anyone else help you read or understand the letter? Who?</p> <p>Did you change anything about the way you looked for a job after receiving the letter from DCSF? Or after speaking with 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 the information about help with childcare costs.</p> <p>Did you receive a reminder letter? IF YES:</p> <p>Can you tell me what information the letter contained? And how was this different to the initial letter you received?</p> <p>Was there anything in this letter in particular that prompted you to accept the offer of assistance towards childcare costs? IF YES: What was this?</p> <p>To what extent did you understand how much you would be able to claim? PROBE: How did you feel about this?</p> <p>How far did cost influence your decisions when you were searching for childcare? Did you feel the amount you could claim was enough? Would your choice of provider have been different if you had been able to claim more?</p> <p>MODERATOR: Only 3 of the 15 families on the pilot are claiming childcare costs above the standard limits – try to ascertain why this is and the extent to which affordability of care is a barrier to use.</p> <p>Was there anything in particular in this letter/ the telephone call that prompted you to respond? Why do you say that?</p> <p>What were your main reasons for expressing an interest in the offer? PROBE FULLY:</p>	

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>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 (PILOT ONLY).</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Try to get a sense of whether or not the participant was already searching for or moving into work anyway. Was it the offer of assistance that prompted them to look for work or were there other, more important, factors. Also to explore to what extent did any change in their child’s disability inform it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had you considered returning to work/increasing your working hours prior to receiving this letter? IF YES: Had you taken any steps towards finding work/increasing your hours? IF NO: Why not? PROBE: Cost of childcare, lack of specialist childcare, concern about leaving child/ren with someone else. - To what extent did the cost of childcare affect your decision to take up employment/increase your working hours? <p>And did you have any reservations about doing so? PROBE FULLY: Lack of specialist childcare, not all costs are covered, payment not taking account of seasonal differences in childcare? Any specific reservations related to their disabled child?</p> <p>Do you think you would have moved into work and started using formal childcare without this offer of support?</p>	
<p>Up to 15 mins</p>	<p>7. Making a claim</p> <p>I’d now like to talk about your experiences from the point when you decided to take up the offer.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: continue to 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>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</p>	<p>This section explores their experiences of making a claim. Though we will be pressed for time, please try and get as much detail – especially over their awareness of their responsibilities to HMKRC over reporting a change in circumstances for example.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: The participant’s initial contact will be with the Childcare Affordability Pilot</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>have been helpful to know?</p> <p>Did you receive a reminder call from the telephone helpline?</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <p>When was this? How much time passed between you receiving the letter and the reminder call?</p> <p>How did you find the person who called you in relation to this offer? PROBE: Did you speak to them directly, or did they leave a message? IF SPOKE TO THEM DIRECTLY: 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? IF LEFT A MESSAGE: Did you call them back? Why / why not?</p> <p>Did you receive any further calls about the Childcare Affordability Pilot?</p> <p>PROBE: Were there any follow-up calls to keep in touch with you?</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <p>When was this? How much time passed between you receiving the letter or the initial call and the keep in touch call?</p> <p>How did you find the person who called you in relation to this offer? ? PROBE: Did you speak to them directly, or did they leave a message? IF SPOKE TO THEM DIRECTLY: 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? IF LEFT A MESSAGE: Did you call them back? Why / why not?</p> <p>Was there anything in this call that prompted you to accept the offer of assistance towards childcare costs? PROBE FOR ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REACTIONS TO THE INITIAL LETTER AND THE REMINDER CALL. DID PARTICIPANTS RESPOND BETTER TO THIS TYPE OF INTERACTION?</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>ASK ALL</p> <p>And to what extent did the people you called support you in your jobsearch/increasing your working hours? Did they keep in touch with you throughout this process? PROBE: How did they do this? How often were they in touch with you? How did you find this</p>	<p>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 or refer to the TCO when we are asking about the SpokenFor helpline.</p> <p>Please also note that there are two types of calls made to claimants (as opposed to claimants calling in). One is the ‘outbound’ call, 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>MODERATOR NOTE: Participants are transferred to the TCO when they have found work and eligible childcare</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please note that the participant may not realise that their call was transferred to TCO.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>– 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 'Childcare Affordability Helpline' 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? PROBE: How did you feel about having your query transferred to the TCO? Did you understand why this was done? Was there any impact on you? Was there any difference in the level of service you received?</p> <p>And how did you find making the claim for this special package of help? 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 CLAIMING OTHER BENEFITS:</p> <p>How did the application process compare to applications for other forms of help? Compare ease and length of process, amount of information they needed to provide, usefulness of notes and helplines with queries.</p> <p>ASK ALL</p> <p>I'd now like you to think back to when you first received payments for help towards your childcare costs.</p> <p>Do you remember how much you were paid? PROBE IF YES Was the amount what you expected? Why do you say this? How far do you understand how the amount was calculated? Does this matter? To what extent does this payment cover your childcare costs?</p> <p>Did you receive your payment by cash cheques or by BACs? How did you feel about this? What were the advantages and disadvantages of receiving the money in this way? Would you prefer to receive the money in any other way? If they received payments in both forms ask which they preferred and why.</p> <p>Have you previously received payments by another method? How did you feel about the payment method changing? Has this affected the way that you manage or use the money?</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 under which you</p>	<p>MODERATOR NOTE: There may be duplication here with the questions above – please use your judgement and adjust the questions accordingly.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE– please get as much detail as possible, particularly if the participant uses multiple formal sources of childcare. These final questions are of particular interest to HMRC.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: There will have been a change in payment, method for some families. Those that were on for a couple of months before the end of March received a cheque, but there were some families who joined at the end of March who would probably only have ever received a BACs payment.</p>

Timings	Key Questions	Notes and Prompts
	<p>would need to contact HMRC? Why do you say this?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: See whether the participant is aware about the need to report a change in circumstances, renewals and so on.</p>	
5 mins	<p><u>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 was the main trigger for you finding work? Why do you say this? • 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. 	This section will draw out the key messages and brings the interview to a close.

Appendix A – Financial Diary

Use this to help participants plan their incomings and outgoings:

Weekly income and outgoings

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

Monthly income and outgoings

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							

Appendix B – Diaries for transition to work/ childcare costs

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

Appendix B – Initial Offer Letters

APPENDIX B – Initial Pilot Offer Letter

0800 0855 041

Helpline open 09:00 – 17:00 Mon - Fri
www.direct.gov.uk/childcarepilot

Date: 16 November 2009
Ref number: XXXXXXXX

Ms XX

Address

Extra help with your childcare costs if you want to go back to work

Do you or your partner (if you have one) want to go back to work but aren't sure if you can afford childcare costs? Well we can help you pay for them. We are offering parents of disabled children living in London extra help with childcare costs, if they choose to move into work of at least 16 hours per week per partner.

You could receive up to 80% of your childcare costs until 5th April 2011 – up to increased limits of:

- **£250 a week**, for one child - £300 a week if you receive the Highest Rate Care Component of the Disability Living Allowance for the child.
- **£350 a week**, for two or more children, only one of whom need be disabled.

After 5th April 2011, we will continue to support you by paying for up to 80% of your childcare costs with a lower weekly limit of £175 for one child, or £300 for two or more.

So don't delay. To register your interest and find out more about this extra help you need to **call our FREE dedicated helpline on 0800 0855 041** (please give the reference number at the top of this letter when you call). You don't need to start work immediately to register your interest.

When you call our helpline, you'll be given all the help you need to:

- get tailored advice about moving into work
- find and take up approved childcare
- get 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 Typetalk.

By the way, if you're already receiving help to find or prepare for work from a Jobcentre Plus advisor please show them this letter when you next see them. They can explain more about the offer, and how you could be better off if you're working.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Howarth, Assistant 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 0855 041**

APPENDIX B – Initial Control Offer Letter

0800 0855 041

Helplines open 09:00 – 17:00 Mon - Fri
www.direct.gov.uk/childcarepilot

Date: xx September 2009
Ref number: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Addressee 1
Addressee 2
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Postcode

Help with childcare costs to get you back to work

Do you want to use childcare, but aren't sure if you can afford the costs? We can help you pay for them. If you are already in work, or choose to move into work of at least 16 hours per week per partner, we can help you cover the costs of childcare.

You can 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. **Call our FREE special helpline on 0845 0855 041** (please give the reference number at the top of this letter when you call).

When you call our helpline, you'll be given all the help you need to:

- get tailored advice about moving into work
- find and take up approved childcare
- get 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 Typetalk.

You don't need to start work immediately to register your interest.

By the way, if you're already receiving help to find or prepare for work from a Jobcentre Plus advisor please show them this letter when you next see them. They can explain more about the offer, and how you could be better off if you're working.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Howarth, Assistant 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 0855 041**

Appendix C – Example of a Cost Breakdown Letter



**HM Revenue
& Customs**

**Child Benefit Office
Benefits & Credits**

Waterview Park
District 15
Mandarin Way
Washington
NE38 8QG

Mrs Jane Doe
1 Street
Town
City
AA1 2BB

Phone 0800 0855 041

www.hmrc.gov.uk

Date 25 May 2010
Our ref XXXXXXXX
NI number AB112233C

Dear Mrs Doe

We have worked out your payment for childcare costs for the period 5 May 2010 to 1 June 2010. We will make a payment of £160 into your bank account within 5 working days.

This is the extra amount you are getting for taking part in this scheme.

How your payment has been worked out

Average weekly childcare costs	£350
Weekly childcare costs paid with your tax credits award	£240
Additional weekly childcare payment due	£ 40
Total payment	£160

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 getting more than you should meaning that you will have to pay it 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

ANNEX A – DFE EXTENSION

A.1 SUMMARY

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- (i) Ipsos MORI conducted thirty extended interviews on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). These interviews were conducted with parents as part of the Disabled Children's Pilot of the Childcare Affordability Pilot 2009 (CAP09) evaluation to **explore issues surrounding accessibility, availability and confidence in the provision of childcare for disabled children.**
- (ii) Participants in the ***Interested and Take-up*** groups were most likely to **have a positive attitude towards using childcare for their disabled child** and believed that using childcare would benefit their disabled child, themselves and their family as a whole.
- (iii) Participants in the ***Not Interested*** group were most likely to **have a negative attitude towards using childcare for their disabled child.** These parents felt that they were the best person to care for their child and had the best knowledge of their child's disability. They also tended to lack confidence in childcare providers and their ability to provide suitable care.
- (iv) Finding suitable childcare was often difficult for parents of disabled children. The main reasons for this broadly fell into five main areas:
 - **A lack of confidence** that local childcare providers had enough staff with the necessary skills to provide suitable care;
 - **A lack of availability** of suitable childcare due to rejections from providers, opening hours of providers or a lack of providers with the skills needed to provide care;
 - **High costs** of using childcare as childcare providers frequently charged parents of disabled children higher rates for care. However, this did not seem to deter parents from using childcare if they found a provider they had confidence in.
 - **Transport** to and from providers was an issue for a small number of participants, and for these parents, the cost of public or private transport was a barrier;
 - **A lack of detailed information** about local childcare providers who were trained and willing to care for disabled children made finding childcare difficult.
- (v) There were also a number of issues relating to specific types of disability:
 - Parents of **children with behavioural/ learning disabilities such as autism** felt **that there was a lack of understanding about the disability** which meant that providers often mistook key behaviours of the disability as naughtiness and so were unwilling to provide care.
 - Parents of **children with medical conditions** found it difficult to find **providers with the specific training or willingness to provide care.** They reported that providers often feared taking responsibility for managing a child's condition.
 - Parents of **children with severe physical disabilities** found it difficult to find **suitable care or activities** for their children and they also **paid the highest childcare costs.**

A.2 INTRODUCTION

This Annex presents the findings from the thirty extended interviews conducted on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). **These interviews were conducted with parents as part of the Disabled Children's research** of the Childcare Affordability Pilot 2009 (CAP09) evaluation to **explore issues surrounding accessibility, availability and confidence in the provision of childcare for disabled children**. This Annex develops several of the areas which the main report explores and also addresses the following objectives of the extended interviews:

- Parents' perceptions and experiences of the degree to which cost is a barrier to the *Take-up* of childcare for disabled children including:
 - Any **financial limitations to using childcare**, including knowledge of available benefits, entitlement, and understanding of the how to make a claim;
 - The **extent to which childcare providers charge more** for care of disabled children;
 - Whether **the cost of transport** is a barrier to the use of childcare;
- **Parents' level of confidence in childcare providers and possible attitudinal barriers on the part of some childcare providers** towards looking after disabled children and parents' attitudinal barriers to using formal childcare for their disabled children;
- **Parents' perceptions and experiences of the availability** and level of flexibility of appropriate formal childcare including:
 - **Siblings being able to access childcare** with same provider;
 - Possible **shortfalls in suitable holiday provision**, particularly in terms of opening hours and places and/or leisure activities which are suitable for children with certain types of disabilities;
 - **How parents access information on childcare** including their knowledge, and use of, the Family Information Service (FIS).

Participants for the extension project opted in to a longer interview when they were recruited for the Disabled Children's research of the CAP09 project. This meant that the sampling criteria were the same as for that of the main element of the Disabled Children's study.

For the main Disabled Children's research, Ipsos MORI conducted **50 face-to-face depth interviews with parents of disabled children** who were eligible for help with their childcare costs through the Childcare Element (CCE) of Working Tax Credit (WTC). These interviews were conducted with customers **who had been offered either the Pilot or the Control offer by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)**. The interviews were conducted in participants' homes.

Participants in the **Pilot group** had been offered up to 80% of their childcare costs, subject to tapering, which withdraws the level of support as income rises (as with the standard system) but with **higher weekly limits** of £250 for a disabled child or £300 for one severely disabled child or £350 for two or more children (only one child needed to

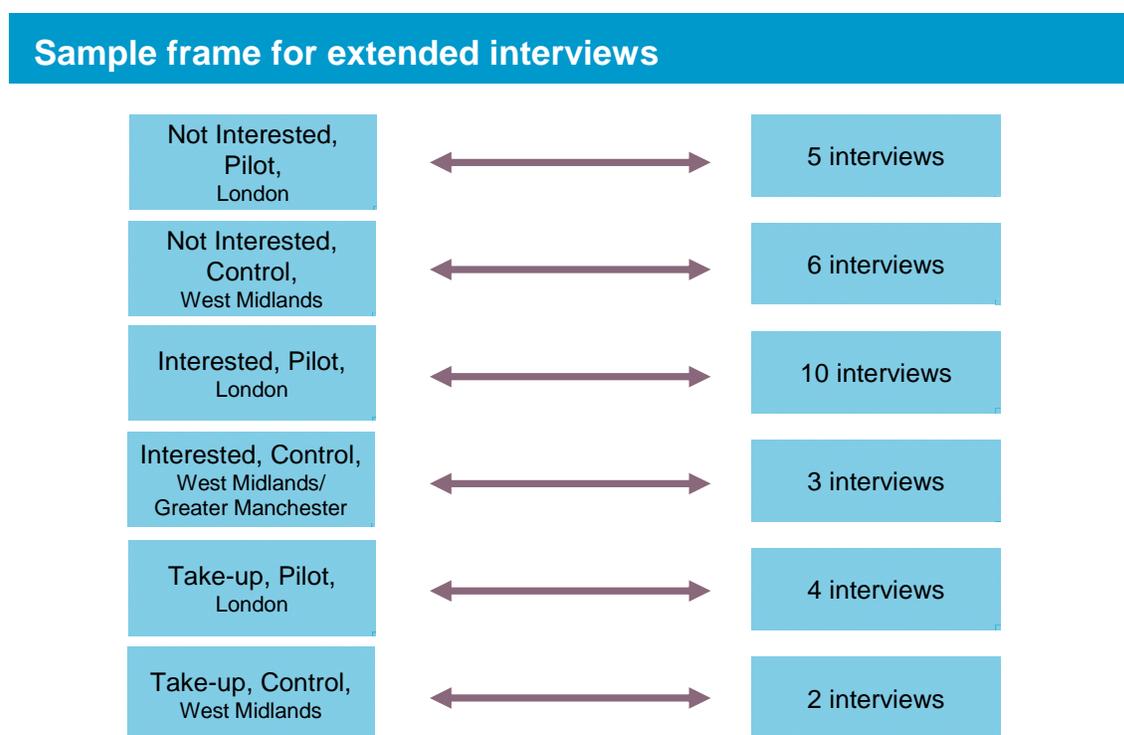
be disabled). To qualify, lone parents needed to work (for at least 16 hours per week) or increase their working hours to at least 16 hours per week, and, in couples, both partners needed to do this.

Participants in the **Control group** had been informed of the **standard system of help** with childcare which, subject to tapering, was up to 80% of the cost of childcare, with limits of £175 per week for one child or £300 per week for two or more children. The eligibility criteria were the same as the Pilot offer.

The **Pilot and Control groups were then subdivided** further according to their response to their offer:

- **Not Interested group:** those who were in contact with the helpline and said they did not want to register an interest;
- **Interested group:** those who registered an interest with the helpline but were subsequently unable to find work and/or childcare; and
- **Take-up group:** those who registered an interest and subsequently found work and childcare.

The following diagram outlines the overall structure of the sample frame for the extension:



These interviews took approximately 30 minutes longer than the main research interviews and lasted for around 90 minutes in total. As is common practice in qualitative research, all participants received a cash incentive as a thank you for their time and contribution. It was made clear to participants that this payment came from Ipsos MORI, not HMRC or DfE. Participants who took part in an extended interview received £10 in addition to the sum they received for the main research interview.

It is important to note that **all parents of disabled children aged under 4 who were contacted declined to take part**, which may be attributed to a large extent to the issues discussed in section 1.8.7 of the main report.

Different versions of the semi-structured discussion guides were used for *Take-up* and *Interested* and *Not Interested* groups in order to reflect the issues faced by each particular sub-section of the sample. The discussion guides are included in Appendix A of this report.

It is also important to note that findings of this annex report are not statistically representative of the views of parents of disabled children in general. Qualitative research is designed to be illustrative, detailed and exploratory and provides insight into the perceptions, feelings and behaviours of people rather than conclusions from a robust, quantifiable valid sample. As far as possible, we have tried to state the strength of feeling about a particular point, but due to the small sample sizes of some sub-groups it has not always been possible to provide a precise or useful indication of the prevalence of a view. The perceptions of participants make up a considerable proportion of the evidence in this study, and it is important to remember that although such perceptions may not always be factually accurate, they represent the truth to those who relate them.

This annex report is structured according to the following chapters:

Chapter A3: Attitudes to using formal childcare – explores the attitudinal reasons parents had for wanting to use formal childcare or not.

Chapter A4: Finding formal childcare – examines the barriers to finding childcare, with a focus on confidence in formal childcare providers, availability of suitable childcare, affordability, accessibility, and information provision about childcare.

Chapter A5: Specific issues relating to type of disability – explores the different types of issues surrounding confidence in formal childcare, along with the availability and cost of formal childcare that parents of children with medical conditions, behavioural and physical disabilities encountered.

Chapter A6: Conclusions – brings together the findings from the annex report to provide overall conclusions.

A.3 ATTITUDES TO USING FORMAL CHILDCARE

The research showed that participants¹ held a range of attitudes towards using formal childcare, and that these **attitudes were influential in determining whether or not they would choose to look for and use childcare**. These positive and negative attitudes towards childcare, as well as practical barriers, both perceived and experienced by participants, are discussed in the following chapters.

A.3.1 REASONS FOR WANTING TO USE CHILDCARE

Participants in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups were most likely to have a **positive attitude towards using childcare** for their disabled child and discussed a range of benefits to using childcare, whereas participants in the *Not Interested* group tended to hold more negative attitudes towards childcare. Broadly, these benefits could be broken into three interrelated categories: benefits for their disabled child; for themselves; and for other family members.

Across all groups, participants **recognised that childcare could help their disabled child's social and educational development**, as well as improving their child's overall level of happiness. For example, it could offer them the opportunity to make friends and interact with children their own age, and to try new activities that they would only be able to do in a group setting. Indeed, nearly all parents who had positive experiences of using childcare spoke of the ways in which it impacted on their child's confidence, social skills and, to a lesser extent, their learning.

As discussed in section 1.8.7 of the main Disabled Children's Pilot report, having a disabled child had a huge impact on participants' lives and the lives of other family members. For many parents, **having a disabled child meant they were full-time carers and had little or no time to themselves**. This was particularly difficult for many in the *Take-up* and *Interested* groups, who were least likely to have access to informal childcare. However, as outlined in section 3.3.1 of the main report, even those who did have access to informal care were reluctant to rely on it too heavily, as they did not want to burden family and friends who often had other commitments and time pressures. As such, a small number of parents in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups discussed how **using formal childcare for their disabled child allowed them a bit of free time** once or twice a week. Parents used this time for things which could not be done during their child's school day, whether that be socialising, relaxing or running errands such as the shopping or attending private appointments.

Parents in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups were also motivated to use formal childcare, as they thought that only by doing this would they be **able to find and sustain employment**. In turn, they believed that being in work would bring them a great number of benefits, such as **additional income, but also improved social networks, improved skills and greater levels of confidence**. They were of the opinion that this would not only benefit them as an individual but, additionally, that these benefits would also be felt by the whole family. However, even if parents wanted to use formal

¹ Please note that all families included in this research had children aged between 4 and 16. All parents of disabled children aged under 4 who were contacted declined to take part.

childcare, they often faced barriers to finding suitable childcare that met their needs and requirements.

For a number of participants in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups who also had non-disabled children, a further reason for wanting to use formal childcare for their disabled child was to **enable them to spend some time with their other children**. In general, parents were strongly aware of the impact that having a disabled child had on other family members, and experienced feelings of guilt for not being able to give other family members equal amounts of care and attention. This had led a small number of parents in the *Take-up* groups to using childcare in evenings and weekends, as well as when they worked, so that they could spend time with their other children and take part in activities which were not suitable for their disabled child. Parents in the *Take-up* group who did this felt confident about doing so, as they could use the same childminder they used while working and so this was not disruptive to their disabled child's routine.

Tonight, for example, she'll [disabled child] be with the childminder so I can take [non-disabled child] to see the fireworks and the bonfire. I wouldn't be able to do that otherwise: she [disabled child] is scared of the noise, and she loves being with the childminder so it works for everyone.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take-up, Control

A.3.2 REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO USE CHILDCARE

Parents from the *Not Interested* group were most likely to be averse to the idea of using formal childcare providers, although some of their perceptions and experiences were also shared by individuals in the *Interested* group. Often, their **opposition to childcare was rooted in traditional values they held about the family** and the role of the parent; they saw their children as their primary responsibility and felt that they could provide the best care. This attitude had been felt most strongly when the participants' disabled child had been of pre-school age² because participants felt that **the early years were crucial in a child's development and that the parent was best placed to provide care in these years**. However, it was interesting to observe that some parents who had both disabled and non-disabled children appeared to feel more strongly that they ought to look after their disabled child than their non-disabled children during the pre-school years, which indicates that other factors contributed to their reluctance to use formal childcare for their disabled children. Indeed, a few of these parents had sent their non-disabled children to nursery but had not considered doing the same for their disabled child.

Parents who had both disabled and non-disabled children, in general, appeared to be **more averse to the idea of using formal childcare for their disabled children than their non-disabled children at any age**, particularly if their disabled child had complex needs that required specialist care. In part, this may reflect the ways in which some **participants were more likely to think of childcare for disabled children in terms of 'care' rather than in terms of 'educational value'**. While these participants, who

² Please note that all families included in this research had children aged between 4 and 16. All parents of disabled children aged under 4 who were contacted declined to take part. The views discussed here are based on past experiences of participants.

tended to be in the *Not Interested* group, did recognise that formal childcare could benefit a disabled child's social and educational development, their primary concern was ensuring that their disabled child was cared for, and they felt they were best placed to provide the level of attention that they needed. In contrast, their non-disabled children did not need the same level of care, and so parents were more likely to assess the value of childcare in terms of how it could contribute to their child's educational development.

There were, however, a host of other reasons that parents did not want to use formal childcare. One of the most common reasons for this was **a lack of confidence in childcare providers**. This lack of confidence was multifaceted: it was partly based on media stories and hearsay about the neglect that occurs at the hands of formal childcare providers but was also fuelled by the perception and fear that childcare providers would lack the necessary experience and skills to deal with their child's complex needs. Finally, this sense was driven by their perception of their role as parent and overwhelming sense of responsibility for the welfare of their child.

I mean, to me, if you have children you look after your children, you don't pay Tom, Dick and Harry to look after your children and, to be honest, some of the things you hear on that telly about other people looking after other people's children, it's worrying.

Lone parent, London, Not Interested, Pilot

Many parents, particularly in the *Not Interested* group, perceived themselves as experts in caring for their children. This attitude was most prevalent among parents of children with medical conditions and behavioural or learning disabilities. It was based on the fact that these parents held an in-depth experience of their child's condition and consequently understood the necessary steps that should be taken if a medical or behavioural incident arose. As a result, **these parents viewed themselves as experts for catering to their child's needs** which translated into a lack of inclination to find employment or childcare, as discussed in section 2.2 of the main report.

You spend all your time with them and get to know what they need before they need it, how to stop the tantrums and keep them happy; how can anyone else do that?

Lone parent, London, Not Interested, Pilot

Linked with this, some parents (typically in the *Not Interested* group) reported a belief that **most childcare providers, particularly childminders and staff who work in breakfast and after-school clubs, lacked the skills to cater for their child's complex needs**. As a result, they had little confidence in the ability of certain types of childcare to provide the same standard of care as they would, particularly childminders and staff who work in breakfast and after-school clubs, which were the most used sources of childcare for school age disabled children. Related to the perceived lack of skills, some participants were concerned that certain childcare providers lacked the appropriate attitude towards looking after children. They thought that childcare providers viewed their profession as a job or business rather than a vocation and, as such, were not dedicated to providing the highest level of care. These parents in the *Not Interested* group felt this to be particularly true of childminders, although the vast majority of parents felt that childminders provided the best care for disabled children.

I know it's a business for them, but don't look at it as a business: you should look at it also as a job. You don't go into a job if you don't have that passion for that job.

Lone parent, London, Not Interested, Pilot

Moreover, as will be discussed below, this perception that childcare providers lacked the necessary skills and training was also reflected in the experiences of some participants who had previously used formal childcare for either work or respite purposes.

The child's age was also identified as a key factor in determining whether parents were willing to consider using childcare. In general, parents said that they had become more positive towards the idea of using childcare as their disabled child had become older. Indeed, although no parents of pre-school disabled children were interviewed, parents of school-aged disabled children said that they had been unwilling to use a childcare provider before their child had started school. This is because participants felt that **pre-school children were more vulnerable than school-aged children** because they were less able to articulate themselves, and so tell their parents if something was wrong or unhappy. This made parents apprehensive about using childcare, especially for their disabled children, whom they viewed as particularly vulnerable.

Related to the child's age were **considerations about whether the child's condition would improve with time** or whether the child would be able to take more responsibility for their own personal care. For example, a couple of parents found themselves looking for childcare at the time of the research but reflected that when their child was pre-school-aged it would not have been possible because their child had been critically ill, in and out of hospital, and in need of constant supervision. Some parents, particularly those with children with severe behavioural or learning disabilities or medical conditions, viewed themselves as carers for life. For most parents, considerations about their child(ren)'s level of personal, physical and emotional development influenced their attitudes towards using formal childcare and seeking employment.

A.4 FINDING FORMAL CHILDCARE

As discussed in section 2.2.4 of the main report, **finding suitable childcare proved to be a significant challenge for parents³ of disabled children** and, for some, was the main barrier to returning to work. The reasons parents were unable to find suitable formal childcare broadly fell into five main categories: confidence; availability; cost; accessibility; and information. These are explored individually below.

A.4.1 CONFIDENCE IN CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

As discussed in sections 2.2.4 and 3.3.3 of the main report, low levels of confidence in local childcare providers who catered for the needs of disabled children was widespread among participants. Moreover, a lack of confidence was clear in the views of a high proportion of participants among both those who had previous experiences of using childcare and those who did not. As discussed, this was driven by the consensus that a disabled child needs more care, attention and patience than a non-disabled child. As such, one of participants' key criteria for choosing a childcare provider they could trust was ensuring that their child would receive sufficient care and attention. This meant that **the ratio of carers to children was an important factor for parents of disabled children when considering which childcare providers might be suitable**, and was often the reason after school clubs were felt to be unsuitable.

Indeed, a small proportion of participants in the *Take-up* group used after school clubs, and they highlighted that one of the main problems was that there were **not enough carers to look after their children properly**. For example, one participant used an after school club at her child's mainstream school, largely because she had been unable to find a childminder. There were twelve pupils per member of staff and, as a result, she was frequently requested to collect him early because they were unable to manage his behaviour. The participant felt this was largely because they were not able to give him adequate attention; his behaviour could be controlled if procedures were followed and techniques were used. Participants said that although many of these **techniques could be learned through training for caring for a specific condition**, because each child's behaviours and coping mechanisms were different, a **childcare provider would need to spend time getting to know the child** and learning these so they could provide the best care.

As discussed in section 3.3.3 of the main report, confidence in childcare providers took time to develop. A number of participants in the *Take-up* and *Interested* group spoke highly about their current and previous experiences of using a range of childcare providers, and the common theme was that they had all developed a **relationship with the provider based on trust and understanding and observed a close relationship between their child and the provider**. Indeed, these positive experiences appeared to be dependent on the childcare provider having the appropriate level of specialist skills, but also a level of enthusiasm, commitment and a positive attitude towards looking after their child(ren).

³ Please note that all families included in this research had children aged between 4 and 16. All parents of disabled children aged under 4 who were contacted declined to take part.

Of course, close relationships between children and childcare providers take time to develop and, as such, **continuity of care was felt to be of vital importance**. This continuity was particularly important for parents who had children with behavioural or learning disabilities, who understood how disruptive change to routine could be for their children. This was another reason for most **parents preferring childminders to other types of providers, as there were both perceptions and experiences of high staff turnover in nurseries, playgroups and clubs**, which had often prevented parents using these providers in the past. Most *Take-up* participants who had managed to sustain employment felt that they had found a childcare provider who they trusted because they understood their child, and were willing to go the 'extra mile' to ensure that they received a high level of care. Similarly, a small minority of participants in the *Interested* group had used childminders in the past and reflected upon how they had become part of the family, without whom they would not have been able to work or study.

She was brilliant, part of the family really. She really cared about the kids. She knew how to manage him, and how to manage the kids together, because they're at that age where they argue a lot. It was such a relief to know I could rely on her and didn't have to worry about being back at 5 on the dot...Honestly, I don't know how I would have managed without her.

Lone parent, London, Interested, Pilot

In addition, the research indicated that confidence in childcare providers among all groups was initially higher if the parent had received a **personal recommendation** from someone they trusted. In some instances, the personal recommendation came from a friend, however, it was also effective if it came from other health professionals. Recommendations assured parents that the childcare provider had the appropriate skills to look after their child. This perhaps indicates **the important role that key workers, health professionals and educational professionals could play in informing parents of disabled children about what specialist childcare is available**.

Participants' confidence in a childcare provider took time to develop. It was contingent on their children being happy in their care and in the parent being confident in the provider's ability to provide a high level of care. As such, confidence, and therefore a willingness to use formal childcare, could be easily lost; **participants who had experienced poor childcare provision in the past were very reluctant to consider using childcare again**. In particular, parents of children with severe medical conditions were particularly hesitant to trust childcare providers if they had previously encountered a childcare provider who had panicked when dealing with their child's condition, because the consequences of hesitating or failing to administer medication when needed could be life-threatening.

A.4.2 AVAILABILITY OF SUITABLE CHILDCARE

As discussed in section 2.2 of the main Disabled Children’s Pilot report, finding suitable childcare was one of the most significant barriers to returning to work that parents of disabled children faced. In general, participants in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups found that, while there was not a shortage of childcare providers in the local area, there was a **lack of childcare providers who had the necessary specialist skills and/or willingness to look after their disabled children**. Moreover, participants who had both disabled and non-disabled children faced the additional challenge of finding a childcare provider who would look after their children together.

A significant proportion of participants in the *Not Interested* group had not researched the availability of childcare in their area, a decision largely driven by their lack of interest in taking up a formal childcare place, as discussed in section 2.2. Nonetheless, despite their lack of firsthand experience of looking for childcare, these participants were under the impression that there would not be suitable formal childcare available if they were interested in using it. This perception **that there would be a lack of suitable childcare was closely related to their lack of confidence in childcare providers**. A considerable number of parents in the *Not Interested* group, as well as a few participants in the *Interested* group, gave examples of how childcare providers used previously had been unable to cope with their child’s disability. This strengthened their perception that there was a lack of suitable childcare providers available, even if it was years since they had last used childcare.

A number of participants from all groups referred to stories they had heard from other parents of disabled children who had encountered difficulties finding childcare. They often mentioned stories of parents ringing up numerous childminders and being unable to find one who was willing or able to take on their disabled child. Participants varied in the level of detail they had about the reasons for rejection, however, it was clear that hearing **other people’s stories of rejection fuelled their own personal fear** of this and further deterred them from investigating formal childcare, even if they would have welcomed the respite that this might have offered.

My friend tried ringing them all – all the childminders in the area - and they wouldn’t take him. And if they wouldn’t take her son, they wouldn’t take mine. Nobody would look after him.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Not Interested, Pilot

Indeed, several participants in the *Interested* group had used childcare before and reported that **providers had refused to take on their child because of their disability**. Participants explained that providers had given a number of reasons for this. Firstly, providers had said that they would not be able to care for as many children if they looked after a disabled child because **the disabled child would require a higher proportion of their time and attention**. Secondly, parents were under the impression that providers commonly misunderstood certain disabilities and were wary of them. This was particularly mentioned by parents of autistic children who said their children were often labelled as naughty or disruptive, while in reality they were merely displaying the behaviours relating to their condition. However, because of these misunderstandings, care was refused.

I can't use a childminder for this reason, because he's got autism and they won't take him. It's not fair, because honestly I need it for him, but I can't use it; because he's different, they don't like it.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take-up, Control

Similarly, parents of children with medical conditions which required regular treatment and interventions, such as epilepsy, often reported being refused admittance by childcare providers. Parents tended to feel a sense of injustice about this; they believed that little training was required to manage these conditions, especially when the child in question was over the age of eight or nine and had, to some extent, learned to manage their own condition. Instead, they believed that the **provider's aversion to risk and anxiety about taking on the responsibility for a condition** which, if not handled properly, could result in serious harm or death of the child precluded them from finding a suitable place.

They won't do it; I've seen it. They panic when they see him get bad, because he needs oxygen they won't do it. Only the specialist nurses will look after him.

Couple, West Midlands, Interested, Pilot

In a small number of cases parents had actually tried to overcome this barrier through offering to organise training for the provider in how to manage their child's condition. In general though, this offer had been turned down and parents were under the impression that there were two main reasons for this: an unwillingness to take responsibility for a potentially fatal condition, as mentioned above, and an element of cost benefit analysis, in that, if the provider felt that it was unlikely that they would be required to look after *another* child with the same disability then it was not worth their while undergoing the training.

It should be pointed out, though, that this was not the case for all parents: **a small number spoke highly about providers' willingness to be flexible and to undertake training**. For example, one participant used a local special needs nursery and had received a grant from the Local Authority for the staff to undergo training to provide one-to-one care. However, the participant had a good understanding of how to access funding and support, as she was well-connected through volunteering and sitting on local neighbourhood boards. Therefore, this experience was not typical for most of the parents that we spoke with.

However, what this example does show is **the importance of sufficient signposting when it comes to parents' ability to find suitable childcare**. As discussed in section 2.3.3.1 of the main report, the support provided by Local Authorities and health care professionals in terms of sign-posting parents to suitable childcare providers varied greatly. Related to this, there were a small number of participants who explained that when their disabled child was younger they had been informed that there were no childminders available in the region that were qualified to look after their child. In a couple of cases, this deterred them from investigating further in later years.

Furthermore, there were practical barriers that parents of disabled children needed to consider, presuming they were willing to use a childcare provider and had found one which was willing to look after their child. **Opening hours** of childcare providers was, for instance, mentioned as a particular barrier, and the lack of flexibility here meant that, for many, combining work and childcare was impossible for them, and something which was

only became viable if parents were able to call on informal childcare or had a flexible employer.

I want to finish, like, quarter to six to take my son from after school club, but most of the time I can't. I'll ask my brother, I'll ask my mum, I'll ask somebody to take him. If they can't, I have to leave my work, go to collect him and I come back to work again. You know, this is really hard for me.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take up, Pilot

Issues around opening hours of school clubs and nurseries were reported most often, as they tended to exercise more limited and stricter hours than childminders. Indeed, some participants in the *Interested* group wanted to use after school clubs if they returned to work, but felt they would be unable to because they were often not available before 8.30am or after 5.30pm. They felt that, in reality, these hours were not adequate because there are not many full-time jobs that are strictly nine to five. Moreover, these opening hours did not allow much time for commuting so further restricted the area within which participants could look for employment.

The fixed opening hours of breakfast clubs, after school clubs and nurseries meant that almost all participants in the *Interested* group who aspired to work full-time or did not have informal childcare to fall back on felt that childminders were the most realistic childcare option for them. However, while childminders offered increased flexibility, a couple of participants worked in or wanted to work in professions where they would be required to work shifts. Previously, this had been made possible because they had informal childcare provided by their partner. However, in instances where the partners had separated (which was common due to the pressure that having a disabled child had on the family, as discussed in section 1.8.7.4 of the main report), participants needed a childcare provider who was willing to work late into the evening, and occasionally at night.

I have a job lined up as a nurse. It's what I've always wanted to be, and I worked so hard to get through the training but the childminder I had has left now. I'm really worried I won't be able to find someone else. It's my main worry. There's no childminders in the borough who will work in my house and work long hours sometimes, especially when they find out I have an autistic teenager...I would pay anything. I'd find the money somewhere.

Lone parent, London, Interested, Pilot

Another practical barrier participants encountered was that childcare providers had a **limited number of places available**, and this was a particular problem with childminders or after school clubs. Indeed, even in cases where participants found a suitably qualified childminder who was willing to care for their disabled child, they sometimes encountered problems with childminders not having enough places available. **Childminders are set quotas by age**, which means there is a limit to the number of children under the age of eight they can look after. This meant that a few parents in the *Interested* and *Not Interested* groups had been turned down by these childminders because they had already filled their quota for children under eight years old.

Participants in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups who had used after school clubs, particularly in secondary schools, had encountered similar problems with the lack of places. They explained that the after school clubs were offered to every student in the school, and the school's policy was to allow every student who wanted to attend the

opportunity to do so at some point during the school year. In practice, this meant that their child might only be able to attend for one term out of the school year, which affected parents' ability to take up work.

A related problem, albeit for a small number of participants in the *Interested* group, was that if the parent had younger or older children as well as their disabled child, they sometimes found that the **childminder was unable to take all the children together**. While a few parents were willing to use more than one childcare provider to get around this, the need to find two childcare providers was difficult due to the issues discussed above. For those who had managed to do this, the logistics and costs of using more than one provider made the process of balancing childcare and work increasingly difficult over time. However, this was not felt to be a problem for most families as they either did not need care for non-disabled children or were able to use the same provider.

I used to have to be at uni at eight o'clock sometimes; there's no way I would have had time to drop one off at breakfast club, one at another childminder's and left my other son at home alone to wait for the school bus, which would only collect him from home. I needed to use the same childminder.

Lone parent, London, Interested, Pilot

The lack of places also meant that parents were sometimes forced into using mainstream childcare provision instead of that specifically tailored to the needs of their disabled child (though some, of course, did make an active choice to do this). For those that didn't, though, a small number found that the after school clubs they used did not tailor their activities so that their disabled children felt fully included. This was particularly true for children aged 12–16. Similarly, **participants found it difficult to find after school clubs and activities for disabled children** that were suitable for their child, because disabilities vary so much.

He used to go to an after school club at his primary school. I wish there was something like that for his age group. You know, something for people above 12, up to age 16.

Lone parent, London, Interested, Pilot

In conclusion, there were a number of problems with availability of childcare, including providers' reluctance to care for disabled children, a lack of suitably trained providers, restricted and inflexible opening hours and a lack of places available. These issues did, however, vary according to the Local Authority area. Furthermore, participants' ability to find childcare was related to a number of factors, including their awareness of where to look for information, as discussed in section A.4.5, and their access to support from key workers and health professionals. Nonetheless, even where suitable childcare was available, it was still necessary for parents to have confidence in it, in order that they could use it.

A.4.3 AFFORDABILITY OF SUITABLE CHILDCARE AND AWARENESS OF BENEFITS

The cost of formal childcare was another barrier to using childcare for disabled children, though it should be noted that, for most participants, it was not the most significant. However, even among those in the *Not Interested* group, who had never looked for formal childcare, there was an assumption that it would be unaffordable for them and that they would probably be charged more as their child had a disability. In some cases, this sense was an important factor which prevented them from looking to see if the reality was any different.

That said, **parents' expectations of the cost of childcare were often mirrored by those who had tried looking for it**, or who had used it in the past. In particular, parents reported being charged more by childminders. Childminders tended to charge an average of between £4-£5 per hour for non-disabled children, yet, for a disabled child, the cost per hour was often significantly higher. Childminders explained to parents that the extra care and attention their child needed meant they would have to look after one less child, which, in turn, negatively affected their income. As such, the cost was passed on to the parents of the disabled child, and they were often asked to pay double the standard rate of up to £10 per hour.

I've been weighing it up and the cost that I'm paying is the biggest problem....a normal childminder costs £6.50 an hour so I pay nearly three times.

Lone parent, London, Take-up, Pilot

It is interesting to note, however, that **those who had been asked to pay a higher hourly rate by childminders understood the reasons for this** and in most cases felt that it was justified, as they recognised the extra work that the provider was taking on by looking after their disabled child. To an extent, parents seemed to equate additional cost with a higher quality of care, in terms of having a childminder with specialist training and a small number of children under the childminder's supervision.

If you find the right one, you use it; you'll find the money somewhere.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take-up, Control

A small proportion of parents in the *Take-up* and *Interested* groups found that **holiday childcare provision was more expensive than term-time care**. While keen to use this in order to both keep their child stimulated and give them respite from full-time care, costs were reported as being between £50-100 per week for a summer activities group, which was felt to be unaffordable by some. However, the small number of parents in the *Take-up* group who thought that this was expensive were currently using wrap-around care, which cost around £20-30 a week, and so, in comparison, the cost of holiday childcare felt relatively expensive. However, they were also typically only earning the National Minimum Wage, and so, to them, the cost was relatively expensive. Interestingly, when discussing the cost of holiday childcare provision, these parents did not seem to consider the fact that holiday childcare was for the whole day rather than a few hours before and after school.

Another issue with costs was that parents were **frustrated by having to pay for childcare provision when they were not always able to use it**. Indeed, a few parents

found that after school clubs and nurseries would request that they picked their children up early due to the provider's inability to deal with their child's medical requirements or behaviour but they would still be expected to pay for the childcare. Similarly, some parents with children with medical conditions spent a lot of time taking their children to appointments, or had children who spent extended periods in hospital; however, to keep their childcare place they had to pay for on-going care. This had been a particular problem when their children with medical conditions had been pre-school age and had attended nurseries.

There were also a number of '**hidden costs**' to using childcare. For instance, a few parents in the *Take up* group found that transport costs were a significant financial burden. Sometimes, these costs were the result of using childcare providers who were unable to provide an appropriate and reliable level of care. For example, one participant used an after school club for her autistic child because she was unable to find a willing childminder. However, she would receive regular phone calls from the after school club requesting her to immediately come and pick up her child. This, she felt, was because they were unable to manage his behaviour, which she thought was driven by the fact that their staff-to-child ratio was not high enough. The participant was very accommodating about this but, nonetheless, explained that having to pick him up early put her under more stress and formed an additional financial burden. This was because she worked full time and was not able to leave early and, as a result, she relied on her mother to take a taxi to pick her son up. Every taxi journey cost around £7, so some weeks the transport costs were higher than the cost of the childcare.

Sometimes the school, they phone me at work and say we can't keep him, we can't keep him. And maybe for two weeks I'll have to pay for a taxi for my mum to collect him, because my mum can't take him by walking.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take-up, Control

As discussed in section 1.8.5 of the main report, **a high proportion of participants in all groups were, or had previously claimed the full range of state benefits available to them, and so almost all participants had a good knowledge of available benefits.** Most participants, particularly in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups had high awareness of available support and reported that they were comfortable with making and managing claims. A small number of *Not Interested* participants reported low awareness of in-work benefits such as the Childcare Element (CCE) of Working Tax Credit (WTC), but this was uncommon, and only amongst those who had been unemployed for a number of years.

A.4.4 TRANSPORT TO CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

In general, **transport to and from childcare was not a problem for most participants across all groups**, especially those in the *Take-up* group who all had access to a car. Participants who did use, or who were willing to consider using childcare, were aware that there were childcare providers in the area. Rather, as discussed in section A.4.2, the problem was that childcare providers in the area were not willing or suitably trained to look after their disabled children.

That being said, **location was important to participants**, particularly if they did not have access to a car. Indeed, it is interesting to note that a much higher proportion of participants in the *Not Interested* and *Interested* group did not have their own car in

comparison with those in the *Take-up* group. In general, participants in the *Interested* group said that if they were to use childcare they would want it to be close to their house, the school their child attended, or their place of work. They felt that the logistics of getting to and from work in time to collect their children, especially if they had children at different providers, meant that they would have to use childcare in the local area.

Given the types of medical conditions and behavioural or learning disabilities that some of the participants' children had, using public transport or walking significant distances was either not possible or had to be kept to a minimum. In order to use childcare, participants who did not have a car would require childcare providers to provide transport to and from their home, but the research indicated that this was hard to find.

There's an after school club he'd like to go to, but he'd miss the school bus if he went and he can't come back by himself. He's not as independent as normal kids his age, he's too trusting. And I have the other children to look after so I can't collect him.

Couple, West Midlands, Interested, Pilot

For a few participants from the *Not Interested* and *Interested* groups, transport was a problem because they had chosen to send their disabled child to a special school which was quite a distance from their home. They relied upon the school bus to collect and drop off their children and this bus service only ran immediately before and after school. As such, they were unable to use breakfast clubs and after school clubs, because if they did then they would have to collect their child themselves. This had not been possible for this small number of families either because they had other children to look after or collect from different schools or because they did not have any means of transport to the school themselves.

A.4.5 INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDCARE

The number of barriers faced by parents of disabled children in trying to find the right childcare provider for their disabled child meant that having access to accurate and detailed information about local providers was vital.

For those in all groups who used either breakfast or afterschool clubs, there was **little need to actively search for information on these services as they were provided by the child's school**. This meant that the participant and their child not only had a relationship with the provider and were familiar with the environment, but they also had information about the clubs provided by the school readily available and accessible to them. Additionally, when making the decision about whether to use a school club, parents were able to ask other parents at the school who were already using them. This meant that participants were able to gain a good understanding of the clubs before they had to make their decision.

You just tend to know about them really [school clubs]. Loads of kids from the school go, so he knew about it, and it's mentioned a lot in letters and that, so you just decide to use it or not.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Interested, Control

However, as discussed in section 2.3.3.1, the level of care and attention which a high proportion of participants' children needed meant that school clubs were not always thought to provide the best care. Additionally, parents' need for a greater flexibility of care meant that most participants felt that childminders were the best type of childcare for their child. Given this, the amount and quality of information about local childminders was an issue which participants often discussed, and they reported using a wide variety of sources.

The most frequently used source of information on local childcare providers was local authorities' **Family Information Service (FIS)**. While it is important to remember that we are dealing with very small sample sizes here, over half of the *Take-up* group said that they had printed a list of local childminders from their Local Authority's website and had found their childminder in this way. The FIS information on childcare was generally trusted by participants because they believed that the childminders listed on the Local Authority's website would be Ofsted registered and reputable. A high proportion of participants, particularly in the *Take-up* group, felt that Local Authorities would be most likely to have a comprehensive list of local childcare providers. A few also believed that childcare providers listed on their local FIS site were in some way supervised by the Local Authority.

It seems safest to go to them [FIS]; you think they [childcare providers listed] must be alright if the council says they are.

Lone parent, London, Interested, Pilot

However, although the FIS' information on childcare was considered comprehensive in terms of the providers available, a **very high proportion of those who had accessed this information felt that it lacked the detail they needed to make a decision**. The main criticism that participants had about the information provided was that it did not give any details on the level of skills and training of individual providers. As discussed in section 2.2 and 2.3 of the main report, because of the high level of attention and care which their disabled children needed, participants placed great emphasis on the importance of childcare providers having the necessary skills and experience to manage this. Lack of information about childcare providers' skills from the FIS seemed to be a particular problem for parents who had children with behavioural or learning disabilities, as many of these parents had experienced refusals by providers because they were either unable or unwilling to care for a child with these types of disabilities. Parents who had experienced this felt that they would have been saved both time and emotional energy if the FIS had only supplied them with details of providers who were either experienced in caring for children with certain disabilities or were willing to undertake the training to give them the skills to do so.

A small number of participants in the *Take-up* group who had experienced this problem said that they had called their Local Authority to ask for more information about the individual childcare providers listed. However, they all reported that the member of staff they had spoken to informed them that the **FIS was unable to provide details on training and the level of experience of individual childcare providers**. This was explained to parents as being a result of the fact that the Local Authority did not want to be seen as recommending certain providers over others, as it was thought that this was anti-competitive. In practice, though, this meant that many participants who had used a list of providers supplied by their local FIS had needed to contact almost all of the

providers listed before they found one who would be willing and able to care for their child.

At first I thought it was great: I had a list of 15 childminders, but then I starting calling, and as soon as I mentioned his autism they lost interest. In the end 13 of them turned me down. It would have saved me a lot of time and upset if the council [FIS] had just told me which two I could use, they must know.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take-up, Control

Word-of mouth also seemed to be a common source of information about local childminders and, indeed, one that was the most trusted. Indeed, a number of participants in both the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups said that they had **discussed availability, quality and cost of local childminders with other parents of disabled children** that they had met at local support groups. They reported that this kind of personal recommendation gave them confidence in their choice, and a number of parents chose their provider in this way. However, word-of-mouth recommendations were not available to all, and, as discussed in section 1.8.3 of the main report, a high proportion of participants, particularly in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups lacked the social networks necessary to make this possible.

A very small number of *Take-up* participants also reported **using online parenting forums** to access information about local providers. Of those that did this, there was a strong sense that this was the most effective and reliable means of finding out about the quality and availability of local childcare providers. This was because these sources allowed for an element of user-generated content; the sites not only provided lists of local providers but also facilitated discussion between parents which allowed them to ask for and make comments and recommendations about different providers.

It's the best way really; it's like shopping for anything else, you always best to go online.

Lone parent, West Midlands, Take-up, Control

Participants who had children with severe physical disabilities which required specialist care tended to use more formal channels to access information about available childcare. **Local charities, health professionals and social workers were all reported as trusted sources of information** about specialist childcare providers. However, for those who did not have these contacts, finding childcare seemed to be difficult as the disabled child often needed a carer with a very specific skills set. This lack of information about local provision, in turn, strengthened their perception that they would not be able to find suitable childcare.

A.5 SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO TYPE OF DISABILITY

A.5.1 BEHAVIOURAL/LEARNING DISABILITIES

Participants⁴ who had children with behavioural or learning disabilities seemed to face certain challenges that were quite distinct to participants with children with medical conditions and physical disabilities when trying to find suitable childcare. In particular, participants who had children with autism lacked confidence in formal childcare providers, based on their previous experience of using them and/or their experience of dealing with teachers at their child's mainstream school. They found that there was a **lack of understanding about the condition and regularly described autism as a 'hidden' or 'invisible' disability**. They felt that because their children appeared physically 'normal' their behaviour was misunderstood. As a result, parents were concerned that childcare providers would **mistake behaviour typical of a child with autism as 'naughty' or 'aggressive'** and not be able to deal appropriately with it, when, in fact, most situations could be diffused or avoided if certain procedures and routines were followed. For example, parents explained that tantrums caused by a change to routine (such as going home from school by a different route) could be prevented by giving their child advance warning of such alternations.

Parents with children with autism had both particularly strong perceptions and experiences that childcare providers, especially **childminders, would refuse to look after their child**. Being refused by childminders was particularly problematic for parents of children with autism, because they felt that childminders were one of the few formal childcare providers who could provide the type of structure, routine and familiarity that their children needed from a childcare provider.

This was a particular issue for parents of children with autism aged 10 and over, who commonly reported that they were refused by childminders. They felt that these refusals were in part based on the physical appearance of their children, who were, and looked considerably older than their developmental age, and concerns that they would intimidate other children in their care. In fact, a couple of participants had been refused by so many providers they had almost given up hope of finding someone willing to look after their child.

When you show them a picture of my son they say, oh, he's not a child.

Lone parent, London, Interested, Pilot

However, in certain Local Authority areas, parents suggested that childcare provision for autistic children was good and reported that they had accessed pre-school centres, summer groups and playgroups, which offered specialist learning provision. It is interesting to note, however, that the parents who had managed to access this kind of care also knew where to go to find detailed sources of information. They tended to be in the *Take-up* and *Interested* groups and often had a higher level of educational attainment and were more determined to enter employment. They stated that they had

⁴ Please note that all families included in this research had children aged between 4 and 16. All parents of disabled children aged under 4 who were contacted declined to take part.

used Local Authority websites, children's centres and charity websites to help them find the care they needed.

In terms of cost, **parents with children with severe autism were very likely to report being charged a higher hourly rate by childminders.** There were two main reasons for this: first, childminders insisted that if they were to look after an autistic child, they would have to have fewer children in their care, and, second, parents with an autistic child often preferred to have childcare provided in-home, as they thought it was beneficial for their child to be in a familiar environment, and this kind of care cost more. These issues are all illustrated in the case study below.

CASE ILLUSTRATION: AUTISM

DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING CARE, PAYING MORE, COMPLAINTS ABOUT CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR (Control offer)

Sarah was a lone parent of an autistic 11 year old son and an 11 year old daughter. **Her son was on the lower to middle range of the autism scale**, with some learning difficulties and mild global delay, which refers to a lag in a child's physical, cognitive, behavioural, emotional and/or social development. Her son had difficulty forming relationships and had repetitive habits.

Sarah has tried to keep her son in mainstream school so that he would not copy behaviour from other autistic children. To help him cope in mainstream school he has a full-time teaching assistant.

In terms of childcare, **previously Sarah had used an Ofsted registered childminder** for six years for both of her children. She felt that she had been "ripped off" as even though **the childminder had no specialist skills**, she had paid around £250 a week with no financial support because she was not eligible for the CCE. She also said this was **more than parents of non-disabled children paid**. According to Sarah, **the childminder was aware of the lack of viable childcare options for parents of disabled children and was more demanding** as a result. For example, she asked Sarah to arrange for childcare cover when she went on holiday rather than arranging alternative care herself.

Sarah's children **now attend a playgroup** while she is at work, which a friend recommended. For two children, the costs were to down to £65-75 a week during term time and £105 during holidays. However, there was **less flexibility** and they would not be able to attend once they moved to secondary school. Sarah felt that many childcare professionals and childminders lack good understanding of disabilities, as well as empathy, and that they should be better trained.

(Lone Parent, London, Interested, Control)

A.5.2 MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Participants who had children with medical conditions had widely varying degrees of confidence in formal childcare providers, and, largely, these were related to the severity of their child's medical condition. Parents with children with severe medical conditions were particularly **concerned that childcare providers would lack the appropriate skills and training to deal with an emergency**. Indeed, a couple of participants explained that, aside from themselves, they would only trust a specialist health professional to look after their child. Parents were also concerned that childcare providers would lack the ability to administer injections and medicines, which were critical to their child's health; a couple of parents included in the research had children who were required to take over 20 types of medicine or were reliant on oxygen. This type of concern was particularly prevalent among parents of young children, who were in their early years at school, who were not able to speak or look after themselves and therefore entirely dependent on others to ensure they received the treatment they needed. Moreover, parents who had older children with medical conditions reflected that when their children had been younger, concerns over childcare providers' skills had prevented them from using childcare.

Given the high level of specialist care children with medical conditions required, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the most common perceptions among parents of these children was that childcare providers would not have the necessary training for these conditions. Furthermore, in reality, the few parents with children with medical conditions who looked for suitable childcare found that childcare providers did lack the necessary specialist training, and that in many cases, **they were unwilling to undergo training**. There were a couple of exceptions though. For instance, one parent was recommended a local nursery by her health visitor. She was able to inspect the nursery and observe the staff at work, and along with the personal recommendation that the staff had the specialist training needed to care for the child, this had assured her that her child would be well looked after.

The cost incurred by participants with children who had medical conditions varied depending on the type of condition and the level of care that their child required. Parents with children with less severe medical conditions or **children who were old enough to manage their own treatment explained that they were not charged extra**. However, the costs for caring for a child with a severe physical disability such as cerebral palsy were often much higher than for a non-disabled child. Indeed, for children who needed very specialised care from a childcare provider, such as the staff's ability to use defibrillators, childcare costs were reported as being up to £20 per hour. This was because the childcare provider would be a highly-trained professional who would be taking on a serious responsibility, and as the care was often provided on a one-to-one basis, the cost reflected this. These issues are reflected in the case study below.

CASE ILLUSTRATION: MEDICAL CONDITION

CHILDCARE PROVIDER CONCERNED ABOUT LOOKING AFTER THE CHILD DUE TO NATURE OF DISABILITY

(Control offer)

John and Emma had three children and their two eldest sons had salt deficiency. They needed injections periodically during the day and salty food as replacement substances. If the condition was not treated properly, it could be life-threatening, so it required constant monitoring. Their condition meant that they were regularly ill at home or in hospital and when they were ill at home they needed both their parents to look after them and it could take a long time for them to recover.

The **boys were refused places at two primary schools because of their care needs**. At their current school, staff needed medical training in how to administer the injections, as well as a fortnight to get to know the symptoms and behaviour of the children. For a month, Emma had to be there every day before the school was happy looking after the children alone.

John and Emma's **attitudes towards using formal childcare now or in the future had been heavily affected by previous negative experiences** they had encountered with staff at schools and childcare providers who had struggled to manage their children's condition. These experiences had left them with little confidence in formal childcare.

For example, Emma recalled an occasion when **nursery staff had panicked when they realised her sons' condition was life-threatening**. In addition, their perception that there was a high turnover of staff in state-provided care was also a concern; their sons needed stability and a childminder who knew them and their symptoms well. Emma **would not trust anyone who did not have a medical background**, and, as such, she did not see any of the providers near where they currently lived as suitable.

(Couple, Birmingham, Not Interested, Control)

A.5.3 PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

In general, confidence in childcare providers was less of an issue for parents of children with physical disabilities than for parents of children with medical conditions and behavioural or learning disabilities. This was because parents of children who had **physical disabilities perceived their children as being less vulnerable** than those with medical conditions and as easier to care for than children with behavioural or learning disabilities.

Despite this, though, parents of children with physical disabilities still encountered problems finding suitable available childcare. In particular, they found it difficult to locate playgroups, breakfast clubs and after school clubs that catered for their disabled children. Finding appropriate after school clubs was even felt to be a problem for parents of disabled children who attended a special school because the schools catered for children with a wide range of both physical, behavioural and learning disabilities. This meant that the **activities provided by the after school clubs were not always felt to be suitable or appropriate for their child**, especially for children with physical disabilities who were mentally capable. On the other hand, their children were not able-bodied and found that their children felt excluded or intimidated at after school clubs at mainstream schools. Consequently, there was thought to be a real gap in provision that catered for the needs of children with physical disabilities.

Moreover, a common problem was that childcare **providers did not have appropriate specialist equipment and that the facilities had not been adapted** to cater for physically disabled children.

CASE ILLUSTRATION: PHYSICAL DISABILITY

CHILDCARE PERCEIVED TO BE TOO EXPENSIVE DUE TO SPECIALIST SKILLS NEEDED

(Pilot offer)

Rachel lived with her son and daughter who were twins, aged 15. Her daughter suffered from epilepsy and cerebral palsy, which had led to visual impairment and the inability to use her hands. As a consequence, Rachel had to take care of all of her daughter's hygienic needs as a young woman, including intimate care.

As a teenager, Rachel's daughter had become physically very strong and was prone to tantrums and aggressive periods, during which she would scream, swear, kick and damage items. Rachel recognised that this type of behaviour was difficult to manage and felt that realistically, **her daughter would need two-to-one care, which would be too expensive.**

Rachel's daughter was attending a school which catered for special needs. However, because behavioural difficulties accompanied her condition and were exacerbated by her age, it was impossible to make her go to school if she did not want to and, therefore, she only attended intermittently. Rachel anticipated she would encounter similar problems if she tried to use a formal childcare provider.

Overall, Rachel saw her **caring responsibilities as a full-time job**; she had observed how difficult her daughter found it to accept new people, she was aware of the high level of care her daughter needed, and how her daughter could be aggressive, and these factors combined made her feel that **childcare was not a viable option.**

(Lone Parent, London, Not Interested, Pilot)

A.6 CONCLUSIONS

The research highlighted that there were a number of important, and interrelated, factors which contributed towards participants' decisions about whether or not to use formal childcare. One of the most significant factors was whether or not parents were willing to entrust their disabled child into someone else's care or whether they had strong traditional views on their role as a parent who should provide full-time care. However, it is important to note that participants' **confidence in childcare providers was closely related to other factors, such as whether the provider had a positive attitude towards caring for disabled children, and whether they were felt to have the appropriate skills and training.**

For participants in the *Not Interested* group, a lack of confidence was arguably the most significant reason that they were *Not Interested* in using childcare and returning to work. These participants also tended to have a strong perception of themselves as the best carer for their child, and, as such, were reluctant to entrust them to anyone else's care. Participants in the *Interested* and *Take-up* groups were more willing to consider using formal childcare, however, it is interesting to note that in a significant number of cases, this was because their circumstances had changed so that they were in a position where they felt more confident trusting a childcare provider to look after their child. For example, they had older children who they now felt were at an age where they would be able to say if they were unhappy in childcare, or they had children whose condition had

improved as they got older so they no longer needed constant supervision, or their child was now old enough to take responsibility for looking after their own medical needs.

Nonetheless, for all participants, irrespective of their child's condition, it was imperative that they trusted their childcare provider. This trust seemed to take time to establish and was based largely on an assurance that the childcare provider had the appropriate skills to provide a high level of care. However, a significant number of participants had encountered problems finding suitable childcare, largely because they felt that **childcare providers did not have specialist training** and were often **unwilling to take on the perceived additional responsibility of caring for a child with a disability**.

In conjunction with finding childcare providers with appropriate skills and training, participants faced **additional barriers to finding suitable childcare that were quite specific to the type of disability that their child had**. Among these barriers were finding childcare providers who had appropriate facilities or who organised activities their child could participate in.

Participants also faced a range of other practical barriers in looking for childcare which would allow them to return to work. One of the most significant was the **problem with opening hours**; participant's in the *Interested* group suggested that the lack of flexibility of most childcare providers, who rarely offered their services outside the hours of between 8.30am and 5.30pm, meant that childminders were the only realistic childcare option, unless they were also to rely on informal childcare. Adding to the problems with opening hours was a lack of transport for those who did not have access to a car, and considerations as to whether the childcare could be afforded.

On this last point though, it is interesting to note that **cost was not considered one of the main obstacles to finding childcare**. Indeed, while participants in the *Take-up* group had found that they had to pay more for childcare than parents of non-disabled children, they were generally willing to incur these additional costs and felt they were justified. These participants gave the impression that the challenges of finding suitable childcare were so great that the additional cost was not too significant.

Overall, participants who were willing to use childcare faced such a range of obstacles in finding childcare that would suit their needs that while cost was, of course, a significant consideration, it was not generally the primary concern. Participants overarching concern was that their chosen childcare provider had the appropriate skills to ensure that their child received a high level of care, however, in many cases they were unable to find a provider with the skills needed.