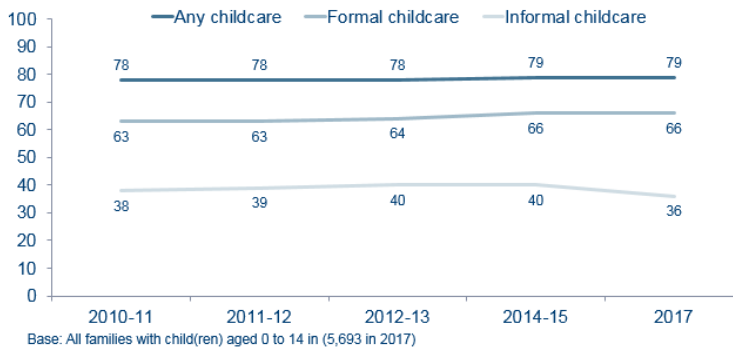




SFR 73/2017, 21 December 2017, fieldwork January – August 2017

## Overall childcare usage similar to the 2014-15 survey, but a fall in informal childcare use

Percentage of families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14 using childcare providers in most recent term-time week

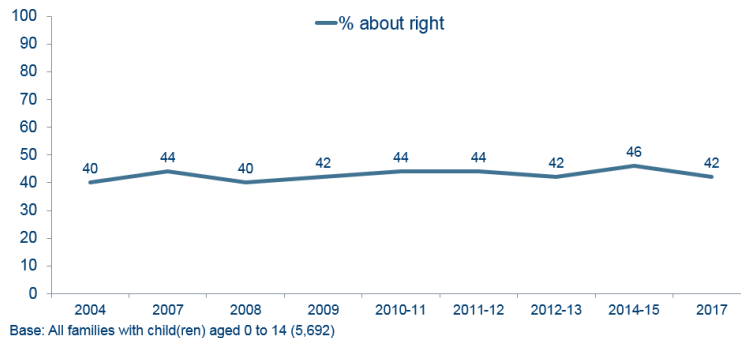


Overall, in 2017, 79% of families in England with children aged 0 to 14 had used some form of childcare during their most recent term-time week. This equated to 4.4 million families or 6.3 million children.

Formal childcare was used by 66% of families, up from 63% in 2010-11 due to increased use of breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, and day nurseries. Informal childcare was used by 36% of families, down from 40% in 2014-15 due to lower take-up among families with school-age children.

## Perceptions of the availability of local childcare broadly stable over time

Perceptions of availability of local childcare places

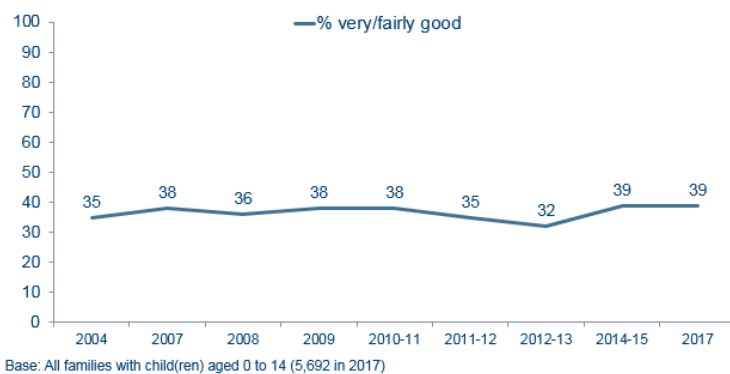


Around two in five (42%) parents in 2017 felt the number of local childcare places was 'about right' - a fall from 2014-15 (46%) but in line with earlier surveys in the series.

Most parents (62%) felt the quality of local childcare was very or fairly good, in line with 2014-15.

## Perceptions of the affordability of local childcare broadly stable over time

Perceptions of affordability of local childcare



Two in five (39%) parents in 2017 rated the affordability of local childcare as very or fairly good, while 34% rated it as very or fairly poor. These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15.

Just over half (52%) of parents who paid for childcare said it was easy or very easy to meet their childcare costs, with one in five (21%) finding it difficult or very difficult. These proportions are also in line with those recorded in 2014-15.

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## About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) provides the main findings of the 2017 survey in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series. This includes overall usage of childcare providers, receipt of the 15 hours of free childcare or early education a week for disadvantaged 2-year-olds and for all 3- to 4-year-olds, parents' perceptions of the quality and availability of childcare provision, the home learning environment, the cost of childcare and perceptions of affordability, and factors influencing maternal employment decisions.

The 2017 survey reports the findings of face-to-face interviews, conducted between January and August 2017, with a nationally representative sample of almost 5,700 parents in England with children aged 0 to 14. The most recent previous survey wave was carried out in 2014-15. The survey is now moving to an annual cycle, with the 2018 wave due to be in field between January and August 2018. For ease of interpretation, data from the 2017 survey wave is compared to the 2014-15 wave, but longer term trends are shown for some key tracker questions. Only statistically significant differences between survey waves, or between population sub-groups, are reported upon.

The survey was funded by the Department for Education (DfE), and managed by Ipsos MORI. It aims to provide information to help monitor the progress of policies and public attitudes in the area of childcare and early years education. The study has two key objectives. The first is to provide salient, up-to-date information on parents' use of childcare and early years provision, and their views and experiences. The second is to continue the time series – which has now been running for 13 years – on issues covered throughout the survey series.

This SFR reports key findings from the survey. More detailed findings can be found in the accompanying Main and Additional Tables documents, and in the Technical Report, which is published on the [DfE website](#).

## Defining childcare

The study uses a very inclusive definition of childcare and early years provision. Parents were asked to include any time that the child was not with a resident parent or a resident parent's current partner.

**Formal providers:** include nursery schools, nursery classes, reception classes, special day schools, day nurseries, playgroups, childminders, nannies or au-pairs, baby-sitters, breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

**Informal providers:** include grandparents, ex-husband/wife/partners, older brother/sisters, other relatives, friends or neighbours.

## In this publication

As detailed in section 5. Accompanying Tables, the following tables are published alongside this SFR:

- Main Tables (Excel .xls)
- Additional Tables (Excel .xls)

The accompanying Technical Report provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality, and explains the methodology used in producing the survey data.

## Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at [EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk](mailto:EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk)

We are undertaking a user consultation on the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in 2018. We would welcome user interest in being involved, via e-mailing [EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk](mailto:EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk)

# 1. Use of childcare and early years provision

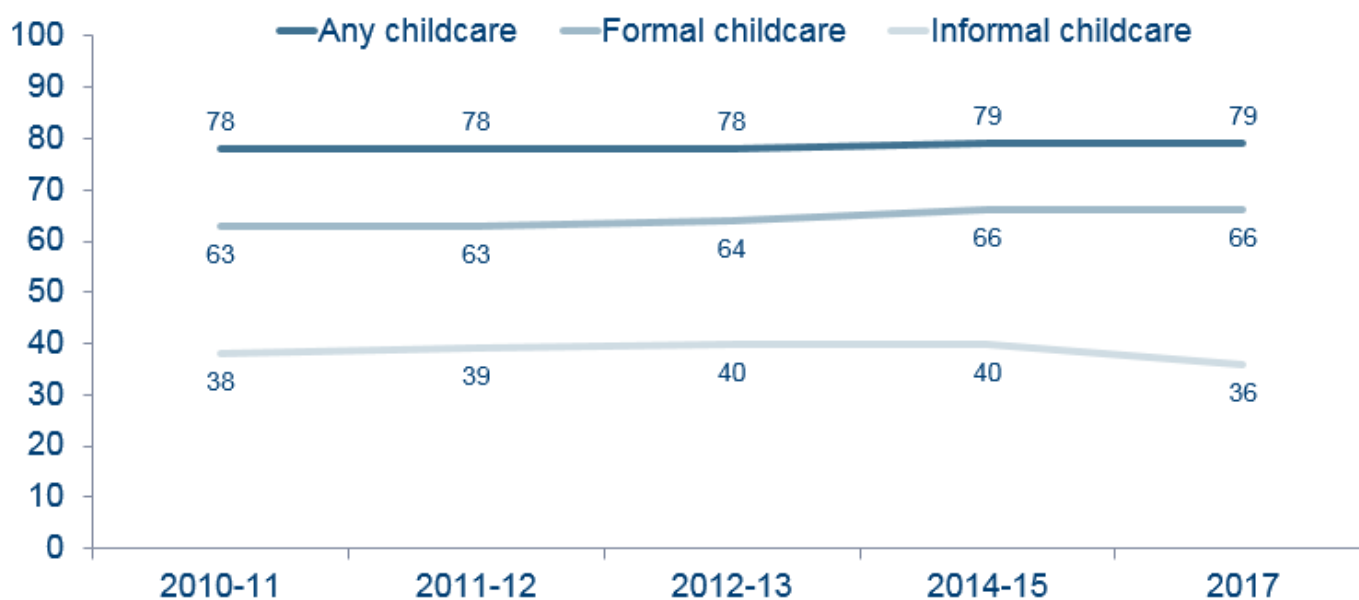
## Overall use of childcare

Overall, in 2017, 79% of families in England with children aged 0 to 14 had used some form of childcare during their most recent term-time week (Table 1.1)<sup>1</sup>. This equated to 4,392,000 families, or 6,304,000 children (Table 1.2)<sup>2</sup>. Two in three families (66%) had used formal childcare and early years provision, and 36% had used informal childcare (provided by friends and family) (Table 1.1).

Since 2010-11 (when comparable data started to be collected) there has been a rise in the proportion of families using formal childcare (from 63% to 66%), but the proportion of families using any childcare, or informal childcare, has remained stable. By provide type, the proportion of families using breakfast clubs has doubled between 2010-11 and 2017 (from 4% to 8%), and this period has also seen rises in the proportions of families using after-school clubs (from 35% to 38%) and day nurseries (from 8% to 10%). The rise in the use of breakfast clubs and after-school clubs was greatest for children aged 5 to 7 (6% of children in this age group used a breakfast club in 2010-11, which doubled to 12% in 2017; and 37% of children in this age group used an after-school club in 2010-11, which rose to 42% in 2017).

**Figure A: Percentage of families using childcare providers**

England, most recent term-time week, 2010-11 to 2017



Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14 in (5,693 in 2017)

Turning to the changes in families' use of childcare between the most recent two surveys, 2014-15 and 2017, the proportion of families using informal childcare fell from 40% in 2014-15, to 36% in 2017. By provider type, families were less likely to use ex-partners (a fall from 6% in 2014-15 to 5% in 2017), grandparents (a fall from 26% to 24%), and friends or neighbours (a fall from 6% to 5%). By family work status, the fall in the use of informal childcare was greatest among non-working lone parent families (from 33% in 2014-15 to 26% in 2017), and couple families in which one parent worked (25% in 2014-15 to 18% in 2017). By family annual income, those families earning under £10,000 per year saw the sharpest drop in the use of informal childcare (from 36% in 2014-15 to 23% in 2017), although higher earning families also saw a fall (for instance, from 45% to 39% among families earning £45,000 or more per year).

Use of informal childcare in 2017 among families with pre-school children only was in line with 2014-15 levels (45% in 2014-15 compared to 43% in 2017), but fell among families with both pre-school and school-

<sup>1</sup> Parents were asked in detail about their use of childcare during the most recent term-time week before the interview took place.

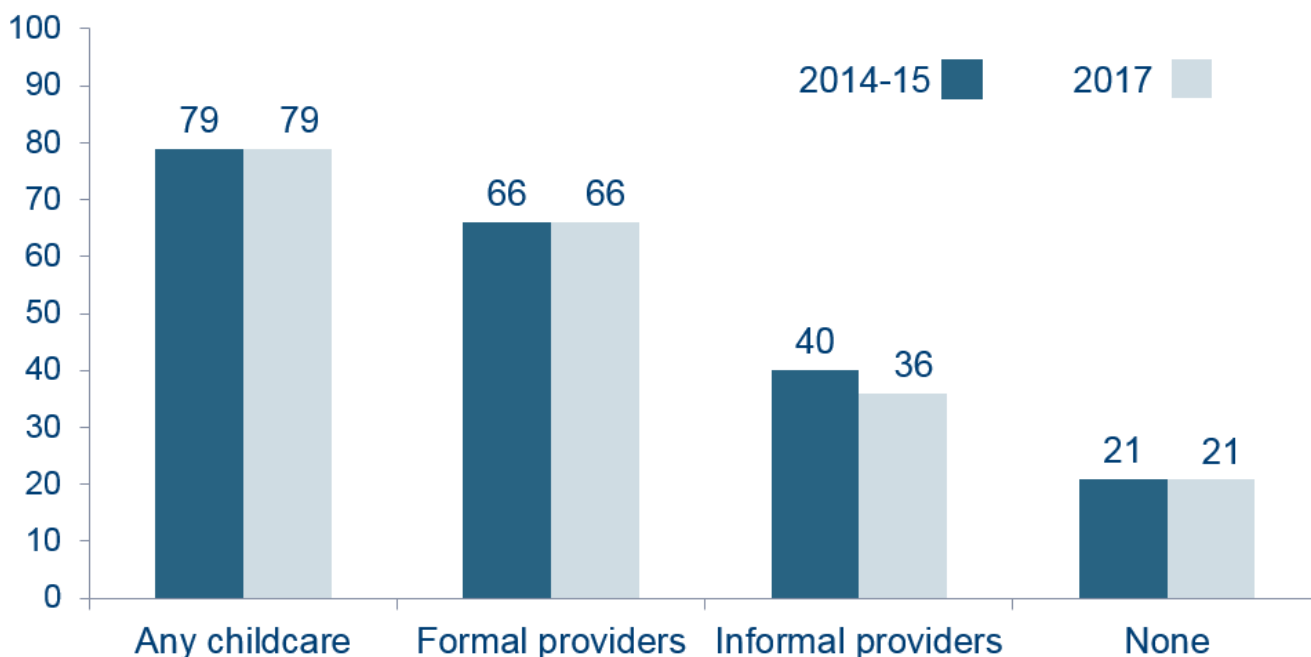
<sup>2</sup> Figures are grossed to a national level using national estimates (number of families in England and number of children aged 0-14 in England) calculated from the Child Benefit Register as of January 2017.

age children (from 38% to 34%), and among families with school-age children only (39% to 34%). Reflecting this pattern of results at the child-level (rather than the family-level), the proportion of pre-school children receiving informal childcare was stable between 2014-15 (34%) and 2017 (33%), but the proportion of school-age children receiving informal childcare fell over this period (from 31% to 26%).

The proportion of families using both formal and informal childcare fell from 28% in 2014-15, to 24% in 2017.

**Figure B: Percentage of families using childcare providers**

England, most recent term-time week, January to August 2017



Base: All families in 2017 (5,693) and in 2014-15 (6,198)

**Use of formal childcare**

The proportion of all children (rather than families, as reported above) receiving formal childcare was 55%, unchanged from 2014-15 (also 55%) (Table 1.3). Pre-school children (aged 0 to 4) were most likely to receive formal childcare from day nurseries (used by 22% of all pre-school children), nursery schools (11%), nursery classes (10%) and playgroups or pre-schools (10%). School-age children (aged 5 to 14) were most likely to receive formal childcare from after-school clubs (used by 41% of all school-age children), followed by breakfast-clubs (8%). Pre-school children receiving formal childcare spent on average 17.0 hours a week in formal childcare (in line with 2014-15, 17.5 hours), while school-age children receiving formal childcare spent on average 3.3 hours a week in formal childcare (up from 3.0 hours in 2014-15) (Table 1.5)<sup>3</sup>.

Characteristics associated with children’s receipt of formal childcare included:

- The child’s age: children aged 3 to 4 were most likely to receive formal childcare (89%) while children aged 12 to 14 were least likely to (36%) (Table 1.3);
- The deprivation level of the local area: a majority of 67% of children living in the least deprived areas received formal childcare, compared to a minority of 47% of children living in the most deprived areas (Table 1.4);
- The family’s annual income: a majority of 69% of children in families earning £45,000 or more received formal childcare, compared to 44% of those earning under £10,000 (Table 1.4);
- The family structure and work status: children in dual-working couple families (63%), and in working lone-parent families (58%), were most likely to receive formal childcare. Children in

<sup>3</sup> Median (rather than mean) numbers of hours are reported because they are less affected by extreme values.

couple families with neither parent in work (37%), and in non-working lone-parent families (45%) were least likely to receive formal childcare (Table 1.4).

Just under half (44%) of families with school-age children used childcare during school holidays (Table 7.1), in line with the proportion recorded in 2014-15 (47%).

Some 58% of parents of school-age children who worked during holidays reported that it was very easy or easy to arrange childcare during the holiday periods, a fall from the proportion recorded in 2014-15 (62%) (Table 7.12). A quarter (25%) reported that it was difficult or very difficult to arrange childcare during the school holidays, up from 21% in 2014-15.

## Reasons for using childcare

Almost two-thirds (64%) of pre-school children received childcare (formal or informal) for economic reasons (e.g. to enable their parents to work, look for work, or to study), with child-related reasons being almost as common (58%) (e.g. for the child's educational or social development, or because the child likes attending), and reasons relating to parental time less common (22%) (e.g. allowing their parents to conduct domestic activities, socialise, or look after other children) (Table 9.10). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15 (62%, 59%, and 24% respectively).

Parents considered a number of factors when choosing a formal childcare provider. For pre-school children, the most common factors were the provider's convenience (mentioned by 64% of parents, an increase from 59% in 2014-15), and reputation (61%). Other commonly mentioned factors included the quality of the care given (53%), and the opportunity for the child to mix with other children (53%).

Reasons for choosing a formal childcare provider for school-age children followed a similar pattern, with the most common factors also being the provider's convenience (mentioned by 48% of parents), and reputation (40%, down from 47% in 2014-15), followed by the quality of the care given (35%, down from 40% in 2014-15), and the opportunity for the child to mix with other children (also 35% and down from 40% in 2014-15).

Parents who did not use any childcare in the past year (neither formal nor informal) tended not to use childcare out of choice, rather than due to constraints. For example, two-thirds (68%) of parents not using childcare said they would rather look after their children themselves, while the affordability of childcare was mentioned by fewer parents (12%) (Table 5.2). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15 (65% and 12% respectively).

## 2. Receipt of the entitlement to government funded childcare or early education

### Policy background on free childcare or early education in England<sup>4</sup>

All 3- to 4-year-olds in England can get free childcare or early education. Some 2-year-olds are also eligible, for example if their parent or guardian gets certain benefits<sup>5</sup>, or if the 2-year-old is looked after by a local council, has a statement of special education needs or an education, health and care plan, gets Disability Living Allowance, or has left care. The free childcare or early education must be with an approved childcare provider, and stops when a child starts in reception class (or reaches compulsory school-age, if later).

### 15 hours of free childcare or early education

For families who meet the eligibility criteria, 2-year-old children are entitled to 570 free hours a year. It is usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example just under 12 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year.

All 3- to 4-year-olds in England can get 570 free hours per year. It is usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example just under 12 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year.

### 30 hours of free childcare or early education for children with working parents

3- to 4-year-olds in England with eligible working parents can get 1,140 free hours per year. This is usually taken as 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example 23 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year. Parents can usually get 30 hours free childcare for their child(ren) if they (and their partner, if they have one) are in work (or getting parental leave, sick leave or annual leave), and are earning at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week.

## Use of government funded childcare or early education

Official statistics from the Department for Education's Early Years Census and Schools Census<sup>6</sup> show that in January 2017 96% of 4-year-olds, 93% of eligible 3-year-olds, and 71% of eligible 2-year-olds benefitted from some funded childcare or early education.

Responses to the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents show that in 2017, nine in ten (91%) parents using free hours of childcare were satisfied with the times they were able to use these hours, while 5% were dissatisfied (Table 2.4). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15 (89% satisfied, and 7% dissatisfied).

Among parents with a 2-year-old for whom no free hours of childcare were used, most (78%) were aware that certain 2-year-olds are eligible for some free hours of childcare each week (Table 2.3).

## Awareness and likely uptake of the 30 hours of free childcare or early education

In September 2017 (after the completion of fieldwork which ran from January to August) the free entitlement was extended from 15 to 30 hours a week, for 38 weeks of the year, for 3- and 4-year-olds with working parents (hereafter referred to as 30 free hours)<sup>7</sup>. Among parents with a child aged 3 or 4, the majority (71%) were aware of the forthcoming 30 free hours (Table 3.1). Awareness was higher among parents in couple families (72%, compared to 65% among lone parents), and among those with higher

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-benefits>

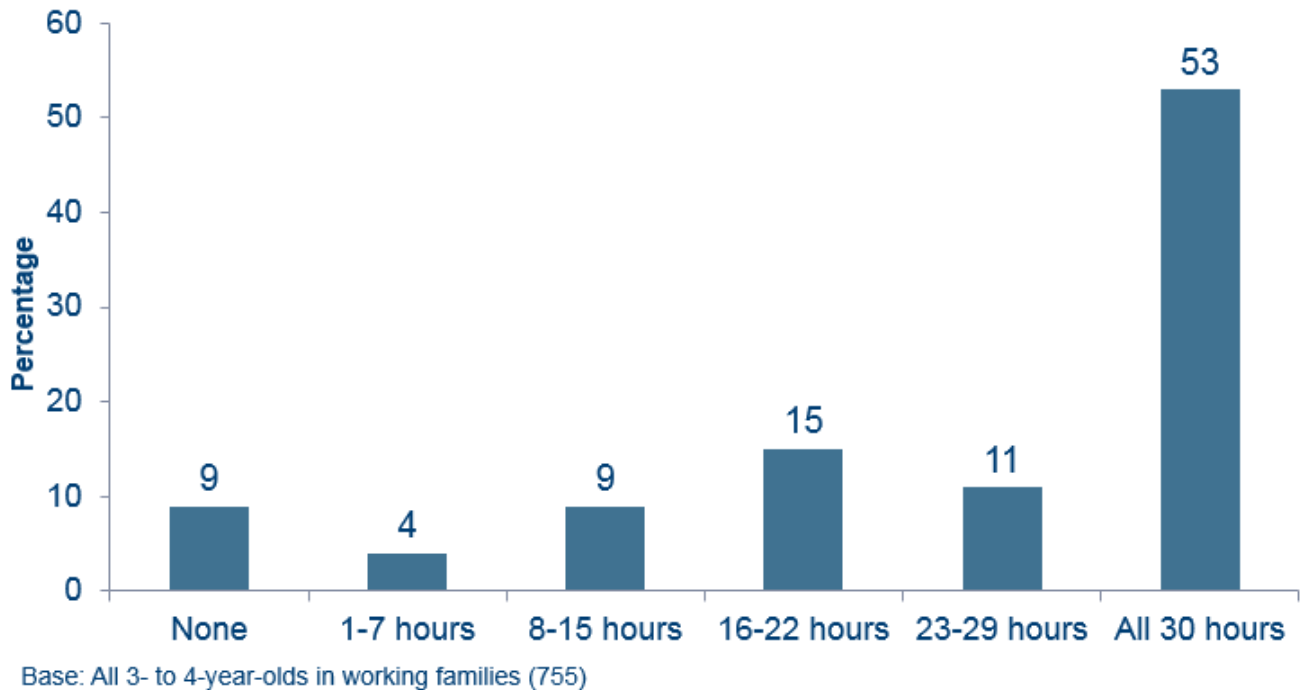
<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2017> (Table 1, Table 3, and Table 4). The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2017 did collect data from which the take-up of funded childcare and early education among 2- to 4-year-olds can be derived, however the figures from the Department for Education's Early Years Census and Schools Census are the official take-up figures, and so are presented here.

<sup>7</sup> The eligibility criteria for 30 free hours are set out at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility>

family annual incomes (82% of those earning £45,000 or more per year, compared to 62% of those earning under £10,000).

Eligible parents were asked how many of the 30 free hours (if any) they would use, were they available at the time of their interview. Responses indicated that four in five (79%) children aged 3 to 4 in working families would likely receive more than 15 free hours a week, including over half (53%) who would likely receive the full 30 free hours a week (Table 3.3).

**Figure C: Number of free hours children aged 3 to 4 would be likely to receive each week under the 30 free hours scheme if available at the time of interview**  
 England, January to August 2017



Among children in working families who received free hours from just one provider in the most recent term-time week, and who would receive additional hours under the 30 free hours scheme were it available; over half (54%) would receive their free hours from more than one provider, if their current provider could not offer the additional hours at suitable times (Table 3.7). And among children who would not receive more than 15 free hours of childcare a week, the most common reasons were that the parents did not require childcare for longer (62%), the child was too young to spend longer in childcare (29%), or because the child would be unhappy spending longer in childcare (18%) (Table 3.9).

Most parents (61%) with a 3-year-old felt that 30 hours a week is about the right amount of time for a 3-year-old to spend in formal childcare, with around a quarter (24%) thinking it is too long (Table 3.8). There were similar views among parents of 4-year-olds, with 64% thinking 30 hours a week is about right for a 4-year-old, and 22% thinking it is too long.

### Perceived future impacts of the 30 free hours

Parents intending to use free hours of childcare under the 30 free hours scheme were asked whether the additional hours would lead them to change their working patterns. Just over two in five (42%) expected to make a change (or changes), including almost a third (31%) who said they would try to work more hours per week, and 12% who said they would try to work on more days per week (Table 3.5). Parents working part time were more likely than those working full time to say they would change their working patterns (58% said they would make a change, compared to 24% of those working full time). Among parents working part time, almost half (48%) said they would try to work more hours per week (compared to only 12% of parents working full time), and two in five (41%) said they would try to work on fewer days per week (compared to only 3% of parents working full time).



A minority (15%) of parents felt their partner would change their working patterns as a result of the additional hours (Table 3.5). Among parents whose partner worked part time, almost half (48%) expected their partner to change their working patterns in some way, while among parents with partners working full time, only 11% expected their partner to make a change. Partners working part time were most likely, according to parents, to try to work more hours per week (39%).

Parents were asked what impact the additional hours would have on their child's development, and on their family finances. For most children, parents felt that the additional hours would make the child better prepared for school (74%), and would make the child get on better with other children and adults (67%) (Table 3.4). Four in five parents (80%) felt that the additional hours would make a difference to their family finances (53% felt they would make a great deal of difference, and 27% felt they would make a fair amount of difference) (Table 3.6).

Almost half (47%) of non-working parents with a 3- or 4-year-old felt it was likely that they would try to find paid work to become eligible for the additional free hours. Among parents whose partner was not in work, a similar proportion (48%) felt it likely their partner would try and find paid work to become eligible for the additional free hours (Table 3.2).

### **3. Paying for childcare**

Three in five (60%) families who used a childcare provider in the reference week reported paying for this childcare, in line with the proportion in 2014-15 (59%). Of families using formal provision, 65% reported paying for this childcare (in line with 2014-15, also 65%), and of families using informal provision, 7% reported paying for this childcare (in line with 2014-15, 6%) (Table 4.1).

#### **Weekly cost of childcare**

The overall median weekly amount paid by families to childcare providers was £25, an increase from £23 in 2014-15 (Table 4.5)<sup>8</sup>. The amount paid varied depending on the number of hours and type of provider used. Costs statistics are subject to a number of caveats, as described in the Technical Report.

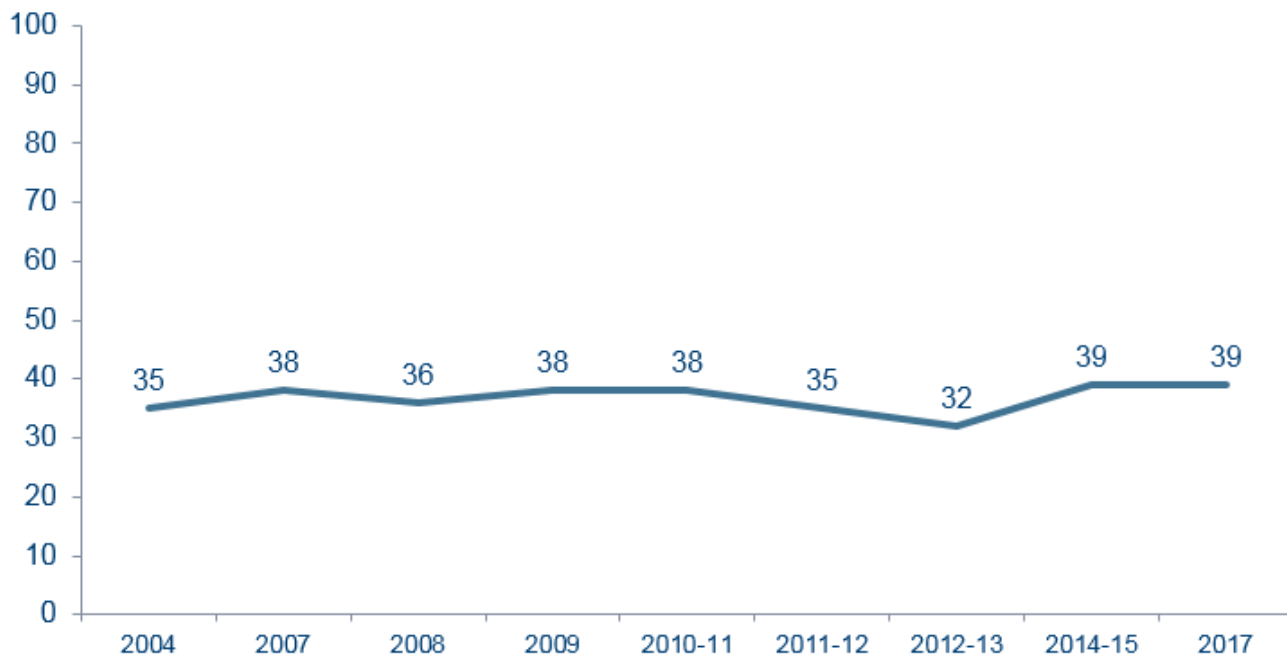
#### **Perceptions around the cost of childcare**

Two in five (39%) parents rated the affordability of local childcare as very or fairly good, and a third (33%) rated the affordability as very or fairly poor (Table 5.1). These proportions are unchanged since the 2014-15 survey (39% and 33% respectively).

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<sup>8</sup> Median (rather than mean) values are reported because they are less affected by extreme values. Details about significance testing on continuous data can be found in section 2.4 of the Technical Report.

**Figure D: Percentage of parents rating the affordability of local childcare as very or fairly good**  
 England, January to August 2017



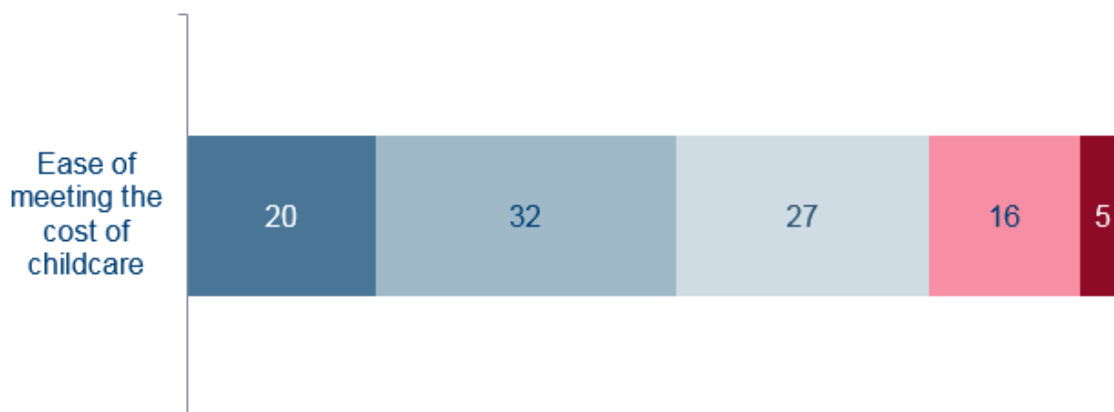
Base: All families (5,692 in 2017)

Just over half (52%) of parents who paid for childcare said it was easy or very easy to meet their childcare costs, with one in five (21%) finding it difficult or very difficult (Table 4.3). These proportions are in line with the 2014-15 survey (53% and 22% respectively).

**Figure E: The ease of meeting the cost of childcare**

England, January to August 2017

■ % very easy   ■ % fairly easy   ■ % neither   ■ % fairly difficult   ■ % very difficult



Base: families who paid for childcare in last week (2,680)

### Financial help with childcare costs

Parents were asked whether they received any financial help towards childcare costs for any children in the household. This covered a variety of sources, including the local education authority (for instance, the entitlement to government funded early education); an employer (via childcare vouchers, direct payments to providers, or provision at the parent’s place of work); and an ex-partner.

Among families who used formal childcare in the reference week, 23% reported that they received financial assistance from at least one external source (Table 4.9), in line with the proportion in 2014-15 (22%).

Parents were most likely to receive support from their employer (14%, a rise from 11% in 2014-15), followed by the local education authority (8%, in line with 2014-15, also 8%)<sup>9</sup>.

## Tax-Free Childcare

### Policy background on Tax-Free Childcare

On 21 April 2017, a new government initiative called Tax-Free Childcare was launched to parents with a child aged under 4 (on the 31 August 2017). The initiative will be opened gradually by the age of the youngest child, with all eligible parents able to apply by the end of March 2018. Over time, Tax-Free Childcare will replace the existing Childcare Voucher Scheme. Under the new scheme, working parents will be able to apply for an online childcare account, and for every £8 they pay in, the government will pay in an additional £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year, for children up to the age of 12 (or £4,000 for disabled children up to the age of 17). Parents will then be able to use the funds to pay for registered childcare.

Tax-Free Childcare launched in April 2017, during the fieldwork period. Most parents (79%) were unaware of the scheme (Table 5.3)<sup>10</sup>.

Parents were asked (from April 2017, when the scheme began to be rolled out) whether they had applied for, or opened, an online Tax-free Childcare account. Among families with a child aged under 4 on 31 August 2017 or with a disabled child aged up to 14 (regardless of their wider eligibility in terms of working status, receipt of other childcare support, or payment for registered childcare) only 1% claimed to have applied for a Tax-Free Childcare account, with a further 3% saying they had not applied because it was not yet available to them (Table 5.3)<sup>11</sup>.

Among parents who had not applied for Tax-Free Childcare, a third (33%) said they would 'definitely' or 'probably' apply for it in the future (Table 5.19). Among those who did not intend to apply for it in the future, the main reasons were because they do not use formal childcare (26%), because they claim Tax Credits or Universal Credit (19%), or because they (or their partner) is not working (16%) (Table 5.20).

## 4. Perceptions of childcare and early years provision

### Perceptions of quality

The majority of parents (62%) rated the overall quality of local childcare provision as very or fairly good, with just 9% rating it as very or fairly poor (Table 5.1). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15 (64% and 9% respectively).

Parents of pre-school children were asked to choose the most important factors in delivering high quality childcare and early years education. The most commonly chosen factors were the provision of activities that encourage children to socialise together (chosen by 65%), staff members each having a small number of children to look after (53%), and children beginning to learn writing, reading, and maths (45%) (Table 6.5).

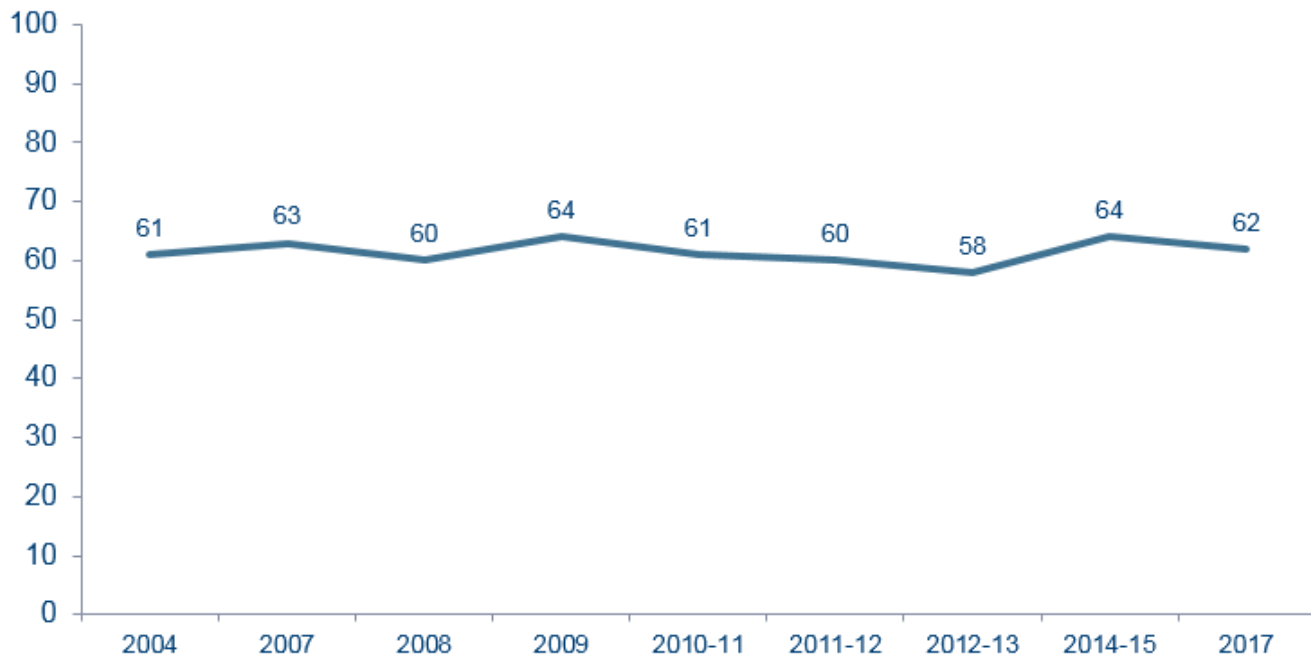
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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that because these figures rely on parents' own reports of the help they received, they are likely to underestimate the true extent of subsidies.

<sup>10</sup> Parents were provided with a description of Tax-Free Childcare by the interviewer, however it is possible that some parents confused Tax-Free Childcare with other forms of support, such as Childcare Vouchers and Tax Credits. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the data.

<sup>11</sup> Parents were provided with a description of Tax-Free Childcare by the interviewer, however it is possible that some parents confused Tax-Free Childcare with other forms of support, such as Childcare Vouchers and tax credits. Further, some parents may have mistakenly reported that they were not in receipt of Tax-Free Childcare when in fact they were. These factors should be borne in mind when interpreting these data. The question wording to be used in the 2018 questionnaire for the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents will make explicit that Tax-Free Childcare differs from other forms of support with which it might be confused.

**Figure F: Percentage of parents rating the quality of local childcare as very or fairly good**  
 England, 2004 to 2017



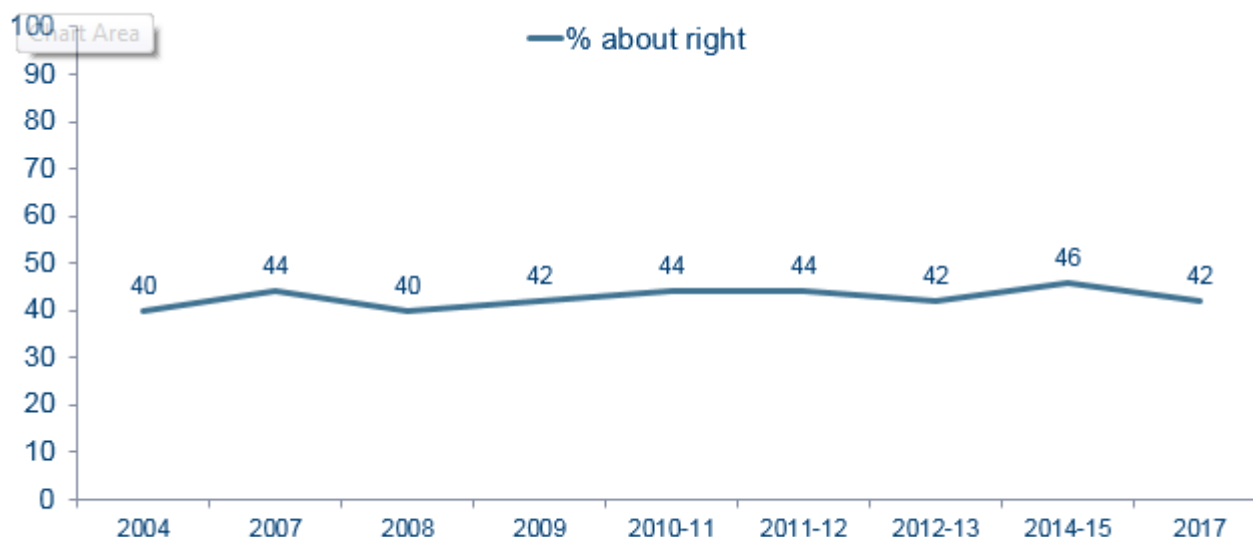
Base: All families (5,692 in 2017)

**Perceptions of availability and flexibility**

Forty-two per cent of parents felt the number of local childcare places was ‘about right’ (a fall from the 46% recorded in 2014-15), while 29% said there were not enough places (in line with 2014-15, 28%) (Table 5.1).

One in five (21%) parents reported problems with finding childcare flexible enough to meet their needs; 37% indicated they did not have problems (Table 5.15).

**Figure G: Parents’ perceptions of the availability of local childcare places**  
 England, 2004 to 2017



Base: All families with child(ren) aged 0 to 14 (5,692)

## Information about childcare

Just under half (48%) of parents said the information available to them about childcare in their local area was 'about right', while 31% thought there was too little information<sup>12</sup>. A further 18% of parents were unsure, while 2% felt there was too much information (Table 5.1). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15.

By family work status, working lone parents were most likely to feel there is too little information about local childcare (38%, compared to 30% among dual-working couple families, and 20% among couple families where one parent was in work). Parents living in more deprived areas of the country were also more likely to feel there is too little information (36% of those living in the most deprived areas, compared to 25% of those living in the least deprived areas).

Parents were most likely to receive information about childcare via word of mouth, for example from friends or relatives (42% having done so in the last year, in line with the 41% recorded in 2014-15), or from school (33%, unchanged from the 33% recorded in 2014-15) (Table 5.4).

## 5. Home learning environment

### Frequency of home learning and play activities

Questions on the Home Learning Environment were revised for the 2017 survey, meaning that time series comparison cannot be made with previous years of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series<sup>13</sup>. In the 2017 survey, children aged 0 to 5 were the subject of questions on the Home Learning Environment.

Looking at books or reading was the home learning activity most frequently carried out with children aged 0 to 5, with 70% of parents reporting that someone at home does this activity at least once a day with their child. The next most frequently conducted home learning activities were learning songs, poems or nursery rhymes (59% of parents reported that someone at home does this at least once a day with their child), and learning numbers or to count (58% of parents reported that someone at home does this at least once a day with their child) (Table 6.2).

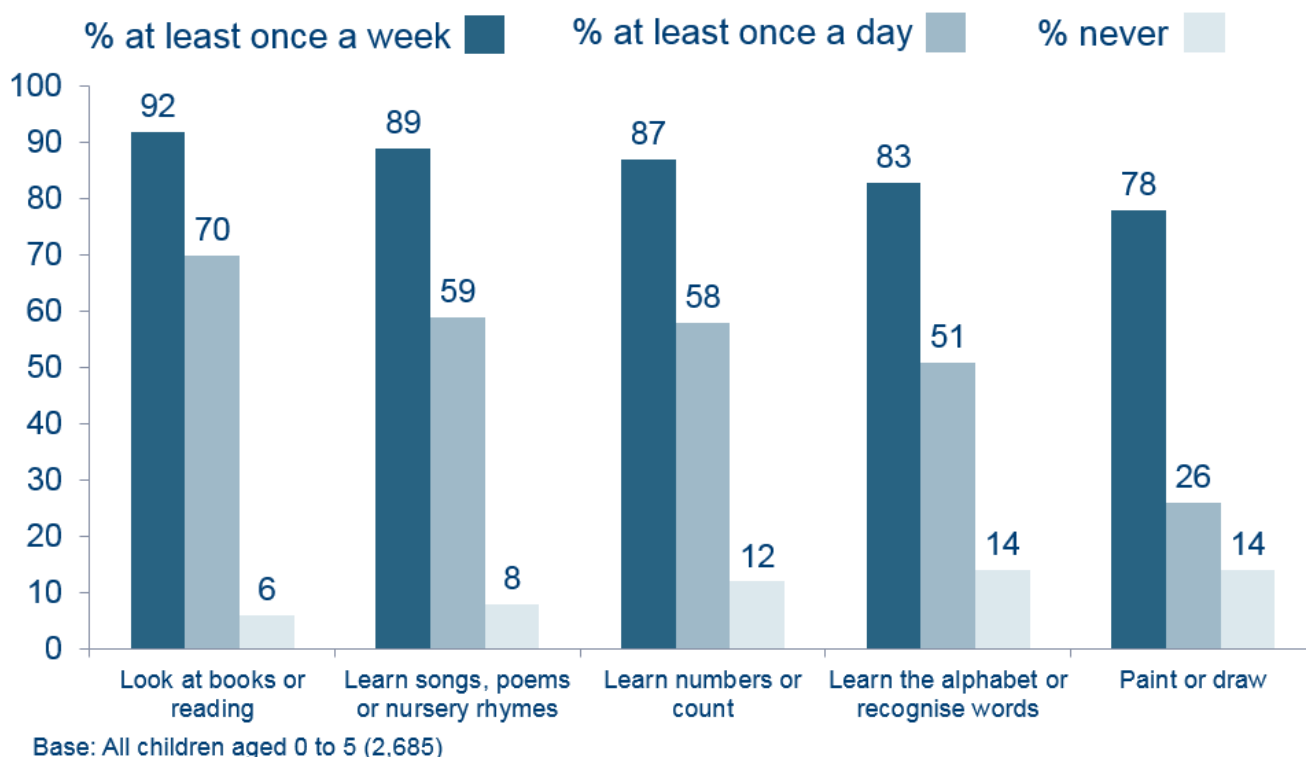
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<sup>12</sup> Under s12 of the Childcare Act 2006, Local Authorities are required to publish information electronically on their website, and update this information at a minimum every term, from September 2017. Local Authorities were also required, between April and August 2017, to provide information on which childcare providers intend to provide 30 free hours in September 2017.

<sup>13</sup> In the 2017 survey questions on the Home Learning Environment were asked of parents where the selected child was aged 0 to 5 (this was limited to children aged 2 to 5 in previous years); parents were asked how often 'anyone at home' does the activities in question with the child (this was limited to the respondent or their partner in previous years); and the specific activities asked about were updated to reflect current policy interest.

**Figure H: Frequency with which parents engage in home learning activities**

England, January to August 2017



Children in couple families tended to take part in these home learning activities more frequently than children in lone parent families. For instance, 74% of children in couple families looked at books or read with someone at home at least once a day, compared to 59% of children in lone parent families (Table 6.15). Engagement in home learning activities also varied by family annual income and the level of area deprivation. For instance, 64% of children in households with an income of £45,000 or more learned numbers or to count at least once a day, compared to 49% of children in households with an income of under £10,000; and by area deprivation, 66% of children in the least deprived areas learned numbers or to count at least once a day, compared to 50% of children in the most deprived areas (Table 6.17).

Most parents (59%) with a child age 0 to 5 estimated that they had over 30 books (or e-books) at home aimed at children in this age range; only 2% reported that they had no books aimed at children in this age range.

### Parents perceptions of home learning and play activities

A third (34%) of parents with a child aged 0 to 5 wanted to do more learning and play activities at home (Table 6.10), in line with the proportion in 2014-15 (also 33%). Parents in dual-working couple families (39%), and working lone parents (39%), were most likely to want to do more learning and play activities at home, while parents in couple families in which neither parent worked (18%), and non-working lone parents (28%), were least likely to. Parents with higher family annual incomes were more likely to want to do more learning and play activities at home (39% of those earning £45,000 or more per year, compared to 28% of those earning under £10,000).

The main factors that would help parents do more learning and play activities at home related to parents' availability: having more free time to spend with their child (44%), working fewer hours (37%), and having more help, for instance help cleaning (12%) (Table 6.11).

## Information about home learning and play activities

Parents of children aged 0 to 5 were asked from where they obtained information and ideas about learning and play activities they could do with their child. Informal networks such as friends or relatives (61%) and other parents (40%) were among the most commonly used sources, with internet sites (41%) and social media (31%) also frequently mentioned (Table 6.12). Official sources of information (such as Family Information Services, local authorities and other national organisations) were mentioned by very few parents, highlighting the predominance of informal over formal sources when it comes to sharing ideas about children's learning and play activities among parents.

### TV and computer games

Among children aged 0 to 5, 10% do not watch any television, videos or DVDs, while the remaining 90% typically watch for an hour or more a day, including 8% who typically watch for more than 3 hours a day. Among this age group just over half of children (56%) do not play any computer games, while the remaining 44% typically play for an hour or more a day, including 1% who typically play for more than 3 hours a day.

Children aged 0 to 5 living in more deprived areas watched more television, videos or DVDs (57% of children in the most deprived areas watched for more than one hour a day, compared to 37% in the least deprived areas). A similar pattern emerged for playing computer games (15% of children in the most deprived areas played for more than one hour a day, compared to 6% in the least deprived areas).

## 6. Mothers, work and childcare

### Levels of work among mothers

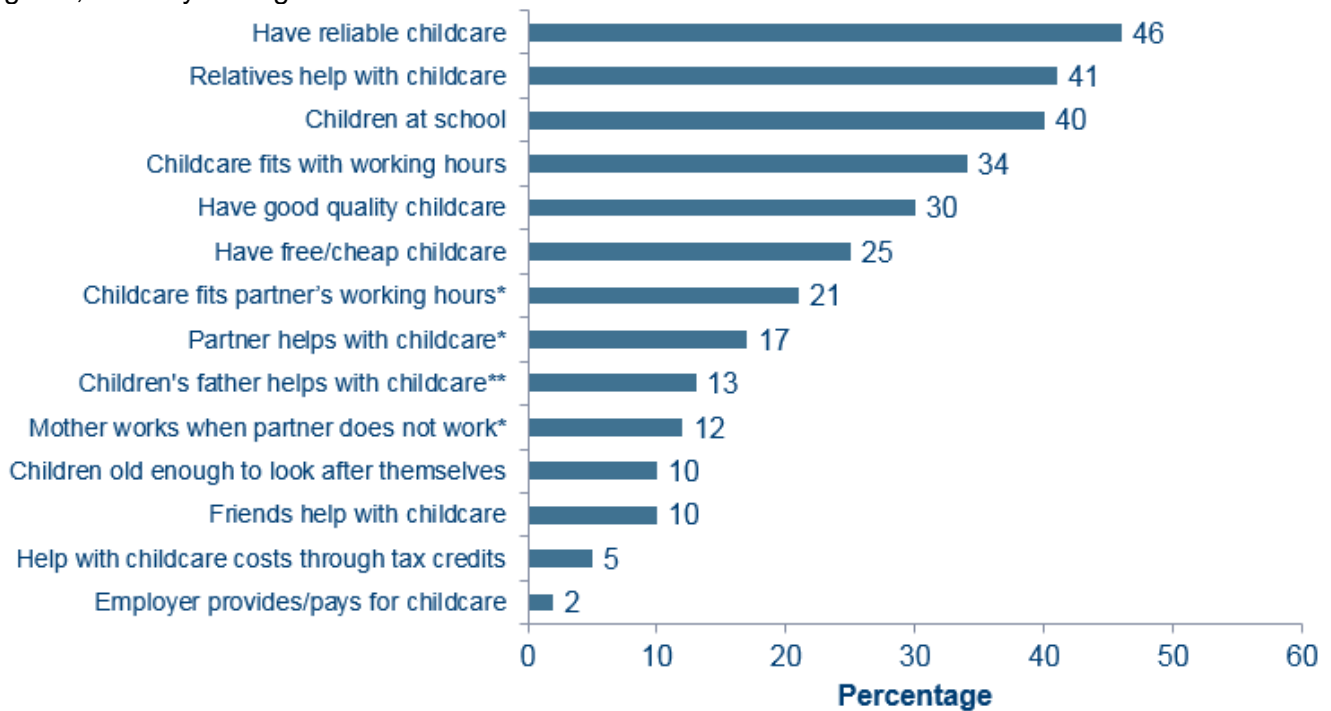
Two thirds of mothers (68%) reported that they were in work, a rise from 66% in 2014-15 (Table 8.5). Half (50%) of non-working mothers said that if they could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable, they would prefer to go out to work, in line with the proportion in 2014-15 (53%) (Table 8.12).

### Factors influencing going out to work

Among mothers who had returned to work in the previous two years, the most common influence on their return to work, reported by 30%, was finding a job that enabled them to combine work and childcare (Table 8.8). Mothers who had transitioned from part-time to full-time work in the previous two years most commonly reported that a job opportunity/promotion (25%) or their financial situation (25%) had influenced this change (Table 8.9).

Almost half (46%) of working mothers said that having reliable childcare helped them to go out to work. Having relatives to help with childcare (41%) and children being at school (40%) were other commonly mentioned factors (Table 8.3). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15 (46%, 42%, and 38% respectively).

**Figure I: Factors that helped mothers go out to work**  
 England, January to August 2017



Base: All mothers in paid work (2,994); \*Partnered mothers (2,336); \*\*Lone mothers (658)

Among mothers working part-time, a third (33%) said they would increase their hours, were there no barriers to doing so; however, around half (54%) said they would not change their working hours (Table 8.1). These proportions are in line with those recorded in 2014-15 (32% and 53% respectively).

## 7. Accompanying tables

The tables from which the charts in this report are drawn are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website, [Statistics: childcare and early years](#), alongside a fuller set of tables.

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## 8. Technical information

The Technical Report which accompanies this SFR provides further methodological information on the survey design, sample, fieldwork, data analysis, interpretation, weighting and definitions used.

When reviewing these tables and the SFR, please note that:

The survey uses a broad definition of 'childcare'	Parents were asked to include any time that the child was not with a resident parent or a resident parent's current partner, or at school. In order to remind parents to include all possible people or organisations that may have looked after their children, they were shown a list of childcare providers: nursery schools, nursery classes, reception classes, special day schools, day nurseries, playgroups, childminders, nannies or au-pairs, baby-sitters, breakfast clubs,
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	after-school clubs and holiday clubs, grandparents, ex-husband/wife/partners, older brother/sisters, other relatives, friends or neighbours.
Detailed information about childcare was collected for one 'reference child' in each household	Because of the constraint of interview length, detailed information on the use and needs of all children in the family could not be collected (unless the child was an only child). Rather, in families where there were two or more children, we obtained a broad picture about the childcare arrangements of all children, before asking more detailed questions about one randomly selected child (referred to as the selected child in relevant sections of the report)
Detailed information was collected for childcare use during term-time periods	As childcare arrangements may vary between school term-time and school holidays, most of the questions focused on a reference term-time week (which was the most recent term-time week). A separate set of questions was asked about the use of childcare during the school holidays by parents of school-age children (these questions had been added in 2008).
Parents' classifications of the 'type' of childcare provider have been checked.	Deciding on the correct classification of the 'type' of provider can be complicated for parents. We therefore checked the classifications given by parents with some providers themselves in a separate telephone survey.
Cost estimates are based on self-reported data and are subject to some caveats	Estimates of childcare costs are based on the amounts families reported paying for the childcare they used for all children, during the reference week. They therefore represent an overall average, and take no account of the number of children in the household or the number of hours used. Respondents were asked about what they paid for 'out of their own pocket'. It is not possible to tell what parents have excluded or included in their calculations (e.g. childcare vouchers, government funded hours, tax credits). The analysis also takes no account of the fees policies of the relevant providers (because we did not collect this information).

## 9. Further information is available

For a detailed technical note	Please see the accompanying Technical Report
Reports for previous years of the survey are available	Full reports for each year the survey has been conducted can be found on the <a href="#">DfE website</a> .
For some related publications	Childcare and early years provider survey, published <a href="#">here</a>  Provision for children under 5 years of age in England, published <a href="#">here</a>

## 10. Official Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as Official Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;

- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as Official Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

## 11. Get in touch

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