Department for Education

Expansion to early childcare entitlements: Childcare Experiences Survey results for the rollout of 15 hours

Research report

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Executive Summary

This research was undertaken by analysts in the Department for Education (DfE) to investigate the experiences of parents using 15 and 30 hours childcare support for eligible working parents.

The expansion was first introduced in April 2024 as 15 hours funded childcare for 2-year-olds and later expanded to cover children from 9 months old to school age. The entitlement was increased to 30 hours of funded childcare in September 2025.

The report draws on three Childcare Experiences Surveys conducted between October 2024 and August 2025 during the expansion of the 15-hour entitlement, alongside two voluntary follow-up surveys tracking changes in parents' experiences over a six-month period. It covers parents' experiences of applying for the entitlement, finding a childcare place, using childcare, childcare costs, and choices regarding employment. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

The statistical report summarising the results of each mainstage survey has been published on Explore Education Statistics. This report expands on those findings by including results from follow-up surveys and analysis from open-text answers included in the survey.

The results of this report should be considered in the context of the childcare policy in place at the time of the survey, before the 30-hour entitlement became available. Since the entitlement has been fully expanded, parents’ and carers’ experiences of accessing support may have changed. As such, the results do not reflect experiences of accessing the entitlement under the current policy arrangements.

About the survey

The Childcare Experiences Survey was an online survey designed using Qualtrics and distributed to 119,970 people across three waves. People participating in the survey were parents who had applied for the 15 hours of childcare support for eligible working parents entitlement (this will be referred to throughout the report as ‘the entitlement’) living in England.

Key findings

- In the first year of the 15-hour entitlement being available, around 80% of parents found the application process easy to follow and more than 90% of parents who applied for the entitlement went on to claim it.
- Most parents who used the entitlement were able to find a place at their preferred provider.

- Waiting lists were flagged as a challenge for around 26% of those parents who claimed the entitlement, and between 40% and 46% of those who didn’t claim it at the time of the survey.
- Just under half (45%) of parents perceived childcare costs as affordable for their family. This proportion increased in the follow-up surveys collected during the expansion of the entitlement to 30 hours.
- Despite general dissatisfaction with childcare costs, around 6 in 10 parents (64% in Wave 2 and 61% in Wave 3) reported that their childcare costs had decreased since they started claiming the 15-hour entitlement.
- Most parents did not change their working hours following the expansion of the entitlement. However, parents from lower-income households were slightly more likely to increase their working hours.
- Around 80% of respondents said the entitlement influenced decisions about their employment. However, employment decisions are shaped by a range of personal and financial factors, so this should not be interpreted as a measure of the entitlement's impact on labour market participation.

Introduction

Background to the expansion of the working parent childcare entitlement

In Spring 2023, a £4.1bn investment to provide 30 hours funded childcare for 38 weeks of the year, for children of eligible working parents from 9 months up to school age, was announced. By 2027-28, it is expected that more than £8bn every year will be spent by government on funded hours in early years education to help working families with childcare costs and support more parents to work.

The entitlement expansion was rolled out by the Department for Education (DfE) and Local Authorities in three phases:

- April 2024 – 15 hours funded childcare for 2-year-olds.
- September 2024 – 15 hours funded childcare from 9 months old to school age.
- September 2025 – 30 hours funded childcare from 9 months old to school age.

The Childcare Experiences Survey (CES) is a termly survey that ran for five consecutive terms from September 2024. The aim of the survey was to monitor the experiences of parents and carers throughout the process of applying for and using the new expanded entitlement as it was rolled out. We also issued a follow-up survey to parents and carers 6 months after the main CES survey to understand if there were any changes in their circumstances.

This research report covers the 15 hours funded childcare from 9 months old rollout that took place in the 2024-25 academic year, including the pilot wave that was carried out by DfE in the Autumn 2024 term and Waves 2 and 3, covering the Spring and Summer 2024/2025 terms respectively.

Methodology

The study comprised three waves of online surveys of parents who applied for the working families' childcare entitlement. Samples were drawn by HMRC from Child Benefit records using a stratified random sampling approach. Wave 1 (pilot) sampled parents who applied between May and August 2024, while Waves 2 and 3 sampled subsequent applicant cohorts and introduced regional stratification, with oversampling in areas of high economic inactivity to improve representation of lower-income families. Around 40,000 parents were invited in each wave from base populations of 308,000 to 360,000 eligible parents.

Parents were contacted by post and invited to complete a 15–20-minute online questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics. The survey explored household characteristics, experiences of applying for and using the entitlement, childcare access and affordability, employment impacts, and family outcomes. Achieved sample sizes ranged from 6,112 to 6,612 respondents per wave, with response rates of 15-17%. Most respondents were female (around 90%).

Survey data were cleaned, analysed in RStudio and weighted from Wave 2 onwards to correct for regional oversampling and rebalance the geographic distribution of eligible parents in the matched HMRC dataset. Open-text responses were analysed using the TextIQ function using Qualtrics.

Results are representative of parents who both applied for the entitlement and could be matched across Child Benefit and Childcare Services records, rather than all eligible families. This means that the study underrepresents higher-income households who may not claim Child Benefit.

Following the pilot phase (Wave 1), several amendments were made to the questionnaire prior to its use in Waves 2 and 3. These included the development of code frames from pilot open-text responses and the conversion of selected open-text questions into multiple-choice questions, improving response efficiency and reducing the likelihood of respondents inadvertently providing personal data. Question wording was refined to improve clarity and updated to reflect the relevant dates for the new cohort. Upper numeric limits for selected open-text questions were also revised to reduce the occurrence of unrealistic outlier responses. This report therefore only covers the results from Wave 2 and Wave 3 of the survey.

Household characteristics

The final analysis included 6,112 respondents in Wave 2 and 6,590 in Wave 3.

9 in 10 respondents (90%) to the survey were women and almost all were living with a partner (98%).

Similar proportions of parents had one child (45%) and two children (44%), while 11% had three or more. The child for whom the entitlement was claimed was usually aged one or two at the time of the survey.

The sample was predominantly middle-to-high income. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71%) reported annual household incomes between £40,000 and £99,999, with the largest group earning £60,000-79,999 (26%). Lower-income respondents were less represented, with only 16% reporting incomes below £40,000, while 13% reported incomes of £100,000 or more.

The survey methodology is covered in more detail in the technical note in Appendix A.

Follow-up surveys

A longitudinal follow-up survey was conducted approximately six months after each mainstage survey wave among respondents who consented to be re-contacted. The follow-up surveys tracked changes in childcare use, childcare costs, employment circumstances and family outcomes over time, achieving sample sizes equivalent to 40-59% of the mainstage survey sample.

In the period between mainstage and follow-up surveys, some children turned three or four and became eligible for the 30-hour entitlement for older children. This change in the type of entitlement used by parents is important when interpreting the findings from the follow-up surveys. Any reported changes should be considered in the context of parents receiving a greater number of funded hours in the follow-up survey than in the main survey.

Research findings from Wave 2 and 3

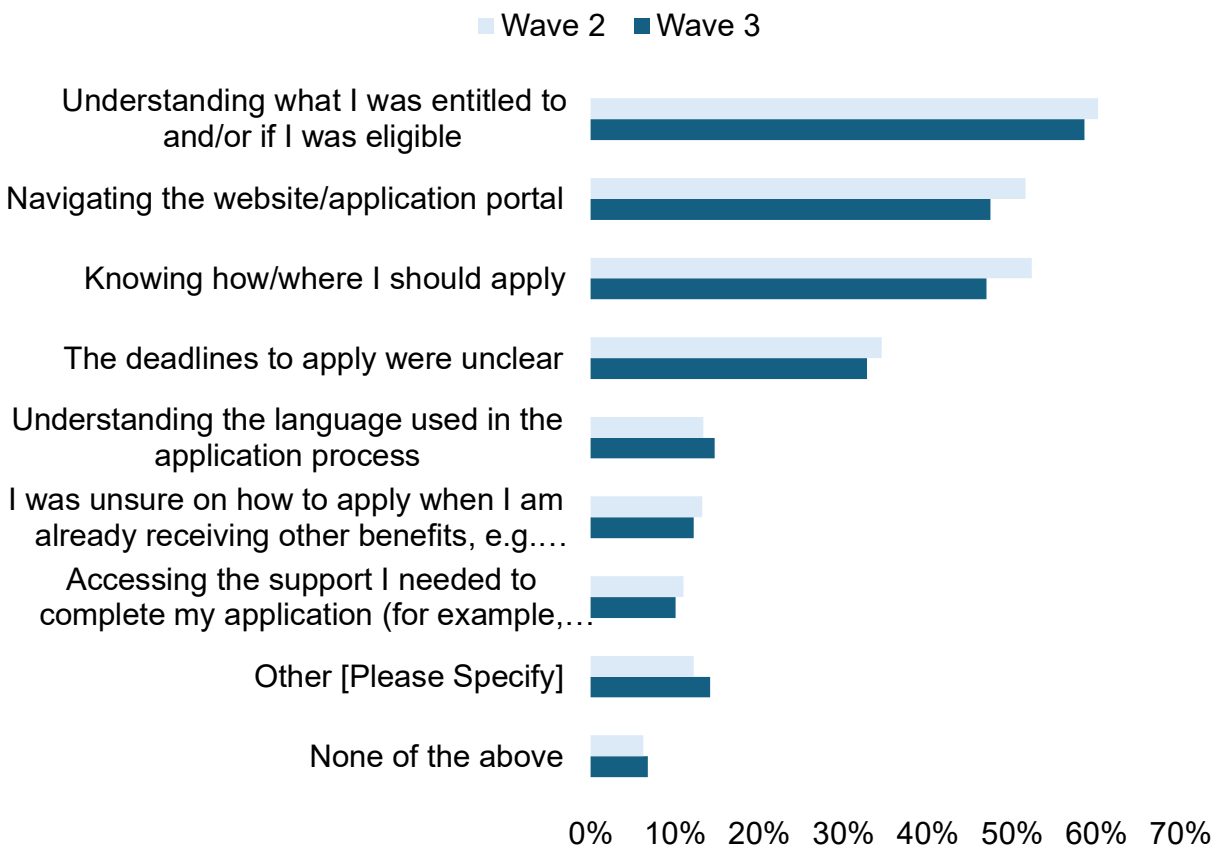
Experiences of applying for the Free Childcare for Working Parents via Childcare Choices

Challenges with application process

Across both waves of the CES, around 80% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the application process for the Working Families Childcare Entitlement was easy to follow.

Among those who did encounter difficulties, the most common challenge was understanding entitlement eligibility, reported by around six in ten (59-60%) parents. Approximately half also reported difficulties identifying how or where to apply (47-52%) and navigating the application portal (47-52%).

Figure 1: Challenges experienced when applying for the entitlement (%)



Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Waves 2 and 3.

Base: Parents who selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree' in the question 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The application process for the working families childcare entitlement was easy to follow.' (n=672 in Wave 2, n=841 in Wave 3)

Note: Parents were able to select multiple options for this question.

Proportion of surveyed parents claiming the entitlement

In both surveys, almost all respondents who had applied for the Working Families Childcare Entitlement went on to claim it (96% in Wave 3 and 97% in Wave 2). Across all regions, most surveyed parents who applied for the entitlement went on to claim it. In addition, around 70% of respondents reported using Tax-Free Childcare alongside the entitlement.

The proportion of parents who claimed the entitlement varied by household income. Higher-income households were slightly more likely to claim the entitlement than lower-income households. For instance, in Wave 3, 93% of parents with a household income of less than £20,000 claimed the entitlement compared to 96% of parents with a household income of more than £100,000. However, no significance testing was conducted between these groups to see whether the difference was meaningful.

Reasons for not claiming the entitlement

Between 3-4% of survey respondents had applied for the entitlement but were not receiving it at the point of data collection. When asked for a reason for not claiming the entitlement, most parents were waiting for a childcare place to become available (20% of parents selected this reason in Wave 2 and 16% in Wave 3) or planned for the child to start childcare next term (30% of responses in Wave 3 and 21% in Wave 2).

'Other' was the most frequently selected response, chosen by between 36% and 38% of respondents, with an option to provide further details in a free-text box. Additional themes included losing eligibility, waiting until the child was older, missing the application deadline and problems with the application code. Example quotes include:

> *'Husbands' salary increased whilst using the entitlement. We are no longer eligible.'*

> *'My wife was made redundant during maternity leave; therefore, we lost our entitlement to the working families funded hours.'*

> *'As I never had a childcare provider that would offer the 15 hours, I was not in a rush to renew the code which had an expiry date on it – I was not aware of this. When I called around the nurseries in September to ask if there was now a space to offer the 15 hours, one provider said yes (…) but I was too late to renew the code.'*

Insights from the follow-up surveys

In the period between mainstage and follow-up surveys, some children turned three or four and became eligible for the 30-hour entitlement for older children. In the Wave 2 follow-up, 30% of parents had switched to this entitlement. As the follow-up survey was conducted between September and December 2025, it also coincided with the expansion of the 30-hour entitlement to children aged nine months to two years, which 60% of parents were claiming at the time of the follow-up survey.

The follow-up survey for Wave 3 was distributed after the 30-hours entitlement was available for children for just over one term. 64% of parents were claiming the 30-hour entitlement for children aged over 9 months to 2-year-old. 27% of parents claimed the 30-hour support for children aged between 3 and 4.

This change in the type of entitlement used by parents is important when interpreting the findings from the follow-up surveys. Any reported changes in perceptions of affordability or childcare costs should be considered in the context of parents receiving a greater number of funded hours in the follow-up survey than in the main survey. As a result, changes in parents' experiences may reflect not only changes over time, but also the increased level of funded childcare they were receiving.

Barriers to finding and using early years provision

Waiting lists

In both waves of the survey, 26% of parents who were claiming the entitlement were placed on a waiting list before they were able to access a childcare place. Among those who were not claiming the entitlement at the time of the survey, 46% in Wave 2 and 40% in Wave 3 were still on a waiting list.

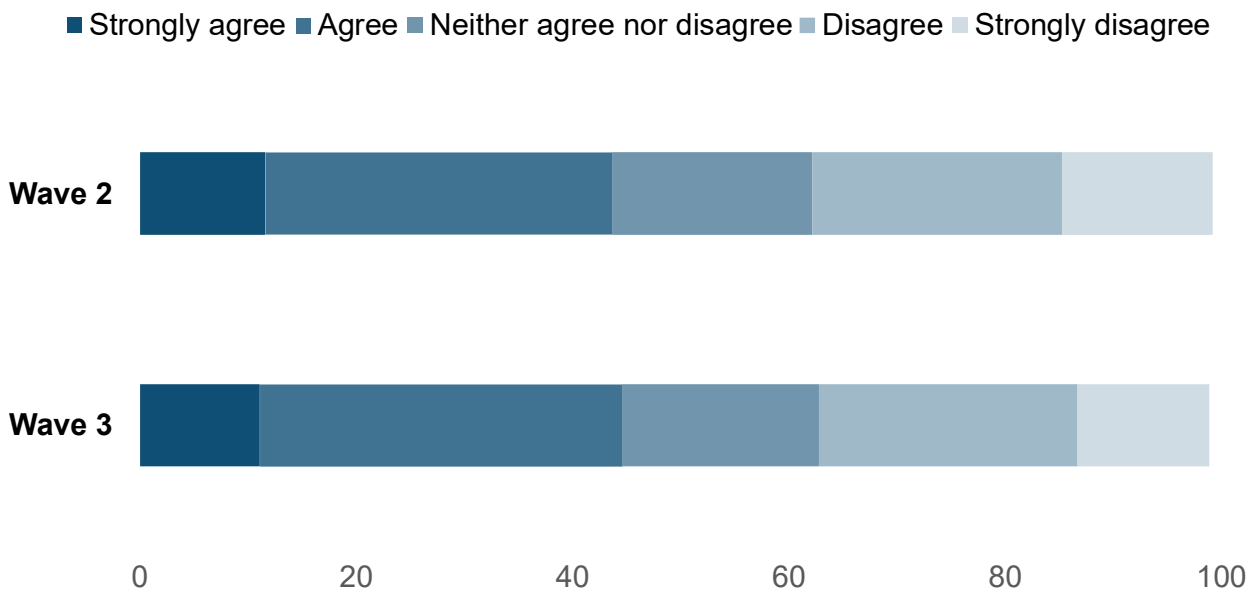
Despite waiting lists, 91% of parents currently using formal childcare reported being able to access a place with their first-choice provider.

Affordability of childcare

We asked parents to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The amount I pay for childcare per month is affordable for my family.'

Less than half of parents (around 45%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that despite the availability of the 15-hour entitlement, affordability of childcare was still a challenge for many parents.

Figure 2: Proportion of parents agreeing or disagreeing with the statement 'The amount I pay for childcare per month is affordable for my family'



Source: Childcare Experiences Survey Waves 2 and 3.

Base: Parents accessing formal childcare provision (n=5241 in Wave 2, n=5978 in Wave 3)

Insights from the follow-up surveys

Among Wave 2 parents who completed both the mainstage and follow-up surveys, the proportion who considered childcare affordable rose from 45% to 60%. Similarly, in Wave 3, the proportion who considered childcare affordable rose from 45% to 59%.

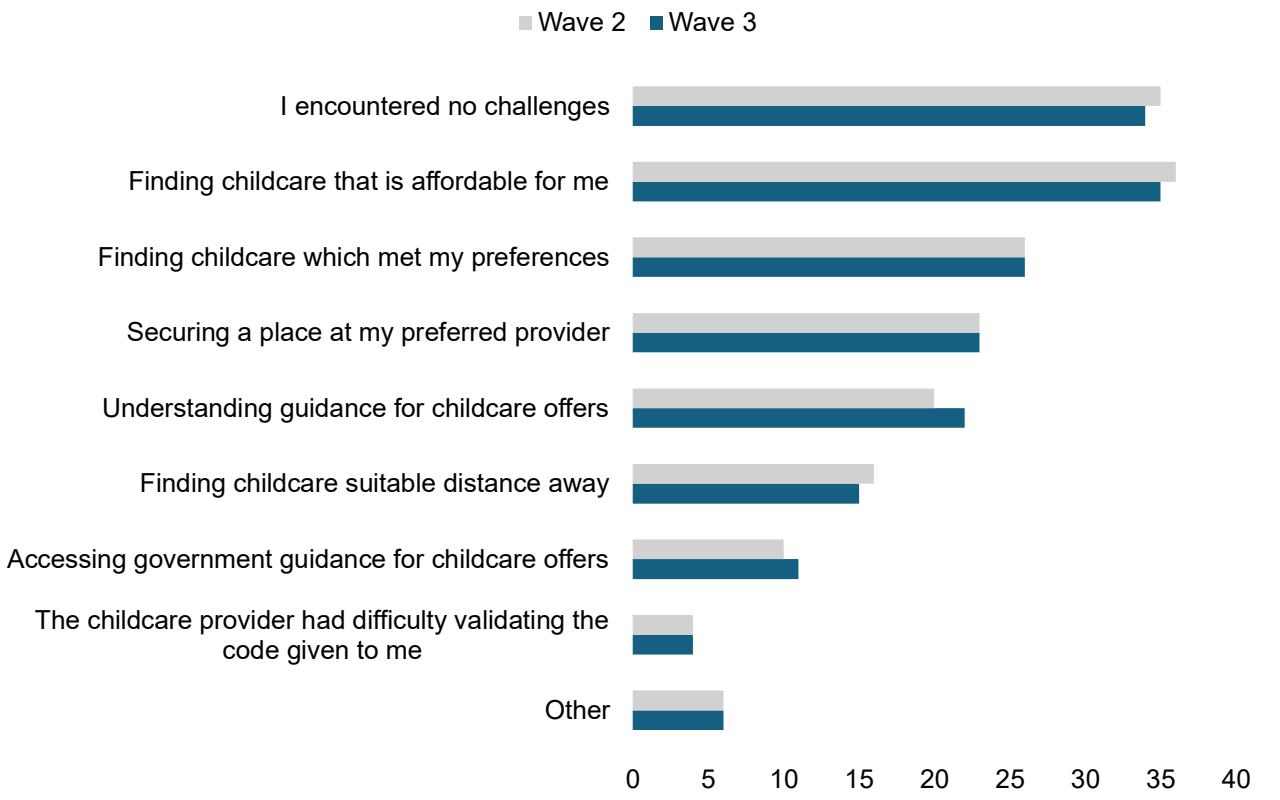
In Wave 3, the proportion who considered additional childcare charges reasonable increased from 50% in the main survey to 58% in the follow-up survey.

The increase in the proportion of parents perceiving childcare costs as more affordable is likely to reflect, at least in part, some families becoming eligible for the 30-hour funded childcare entitlement during this period.

Challenges with finding a childcare place

We asked parents who claimed the 15-hour entitlement whether they experienced any challenges when applying for a childcare place. In both mainstage surveys, most people encountered no challenges. However, among those who did, the most common one, reported by around a third of parents (35%) in both surveys, was finding childcare that was affordable for them. This was followed by finding suitable childcare that met individual preferences (25% of parents) and securing a place at a preferred provider (23% of parents).

Figure 3: Challenges finding a childcare place



Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Waves 2 and 3.

Base: Parents accessing formal childcare providers (n= 5168 in Wave 2, n=6066 in Wave 3).

Satisfaction with hours offered at a chosen provider

We asked parents to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the number of hours offered by their main childcare provider.

Across both surveys, the level of satisfaction remained stable, with 83% of parents saying they were satisfied or very satisfied. Around 6% were dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with opening hours

More than 90% of parents in each wave were satisfied or very satisfied with their main provider's opening hours, while around 5% were dissatisfied.

Among those who reported being dissatisfied with the opening hours, more parents were unhappy with the provider not opening early enough rather than not closing late enough; however, this difference was small.

Restrictions on how the funded hours can be used

Between 17-20% of parents reported facing restrictions on how they could use their entitlement-funded hours. Restrictions were more commonly reported by parents using

nurseries and school-based providers than by those using childminders as their primary provider, although this difference was small. For instance, in Wave 3, 23% of parents using school-based providers and 21% of parents using nurseries reported facing restrictions on hours, compared to 12% of parents using childminders. However, findings for school-based providers should be interpreted with caution because this type of provider was only used by 3-4% of parents.

By Wave 3, the most frequently reported restrictions were limits on the number of funded hours that could be used per day (35%), requirements to use hours only at certain times of day (22%), and requirements to use funded hours in full-day sessions (22%).

Table 1: Restrictions placed on parents when using funded hours

	Wave 2	Wave 3
I can only use a certain number of hours per day (e.g. only 6 hours per day)	33%	36%
I can only use the hours for full days	23%	25%
I can only use the hours before and/or after a certain time of day	20%	19%
I can only use the hours at certain times of day (e.g. in the morning)	19%	18%
I can only use the entitlements if my child is in the childcare provider for more than 15 hours per week	16%	16%
I can only use the hours on certain days of the week	8%	9%
Other	29%	31%

Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Waves 2 and 3

Base: Parents who access the 15-hour entitlement and who indicated facing restrictions from their childcare provider on how they could use funded hours (n=915 in Wave 2, n=1189 in Wave 3). Multiple-choice question.

Satisfaction with amount of childcare offered

More than 90% of parents in each of the surveys were satisfied with the number of days per week that their childcare provider offered.

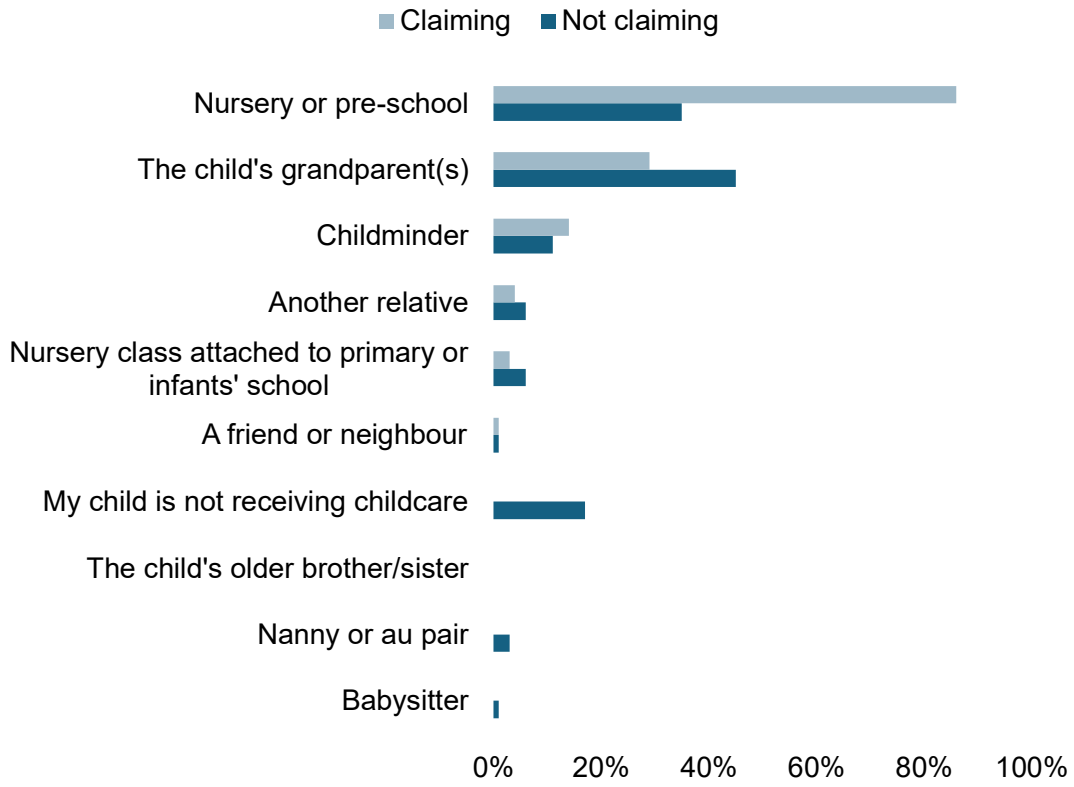
Similarly, more than 90% in each survey were either satisfied or very satisfied with the number of weeks per year offered by their main childcare provider.

Using childcare provision

Among parents claiming the entitlement, nursery or pre-school provision was consistently the most used form of childcare (86% of parents). This was followed by the child's grandparents (30%). Childminders were the third most used option, with around 14% of respondents using this type of provision.

Among parents who did not claim the entitlement, care provided by the child's grandparent(s) was the most used form of childcare, with 45% of parents using that form of childcare in Wave 2 and 48% in Wave 3. Nursery or pre-school provision was the second most common option, used by 35% of parents in Wave 2 and 38% in Wave 3. 17% of children in Wave 2 and 15% of children in Wave 3 were not receiving childcare from anyone other than their parent or carer at the time of the survey.

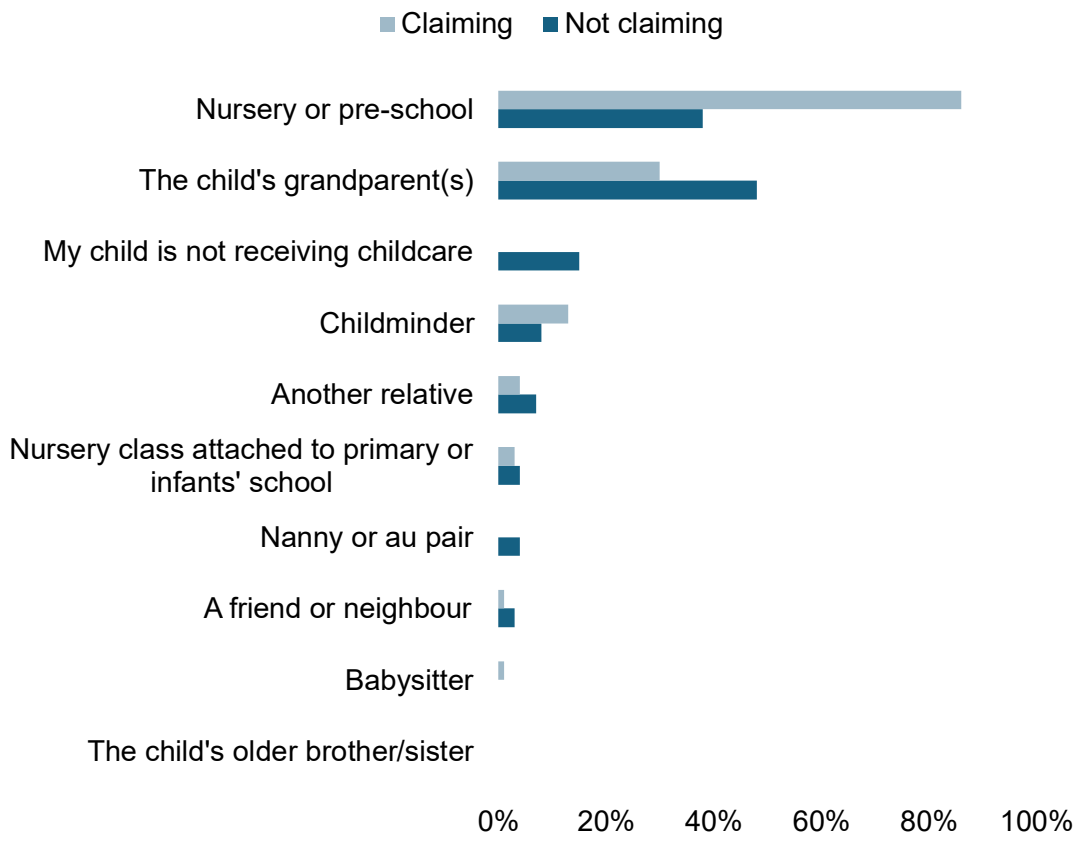
Figure 4: Types of childcare used by parents in Wave 2 by whether the parent was claiming the 15-hour entitlement



Source: Childcare Experiences Survey Wave 2,

Base: All survey participants who were either claiming (n=5,168) or not claiming (n=178) the entitlement at the time of the survey. Participants were able to select multiple options.

Figure 5: Types of childcare used by parents in Wave 3 by whether the parent was claiming the 15-hour entitlement



Source: Childcare Experiences Survey Wave 3

Base: All survey participants who were either claiming (n=6,110) or not claiming (n=291) the entitlement at the time of the survey. Participants were able to select multiple options.

Reasons for using and not using formal childcare

The most common factor influencing respondents' decision to use formal childcare was the ability to work (92%). Parents also believed childcare was important for their child's social (82-83%), emotional (69-70%) and physical (61-62%) development.

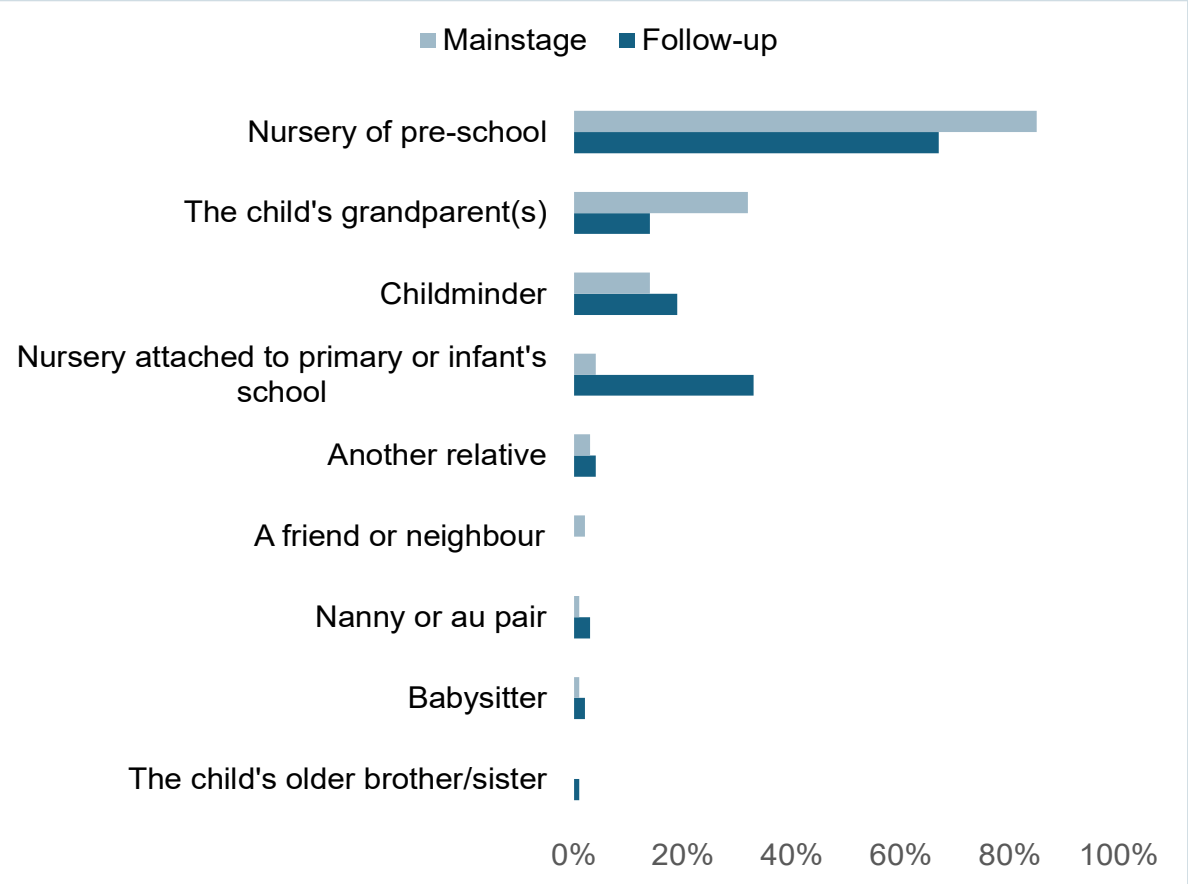
We asked parents who did not use formal childcare at the time of the survey (n=101 in Wave 2, n=146 in Wave 3) to select the reasons for not doing so. The top two reasons were waiting for the child to become older (37-48%) and having family members who help with childcare (42-48%). Some parents (33% in Wave 2 and 44% in Wave 3) also selected the high cost of formal childcare as a factor preventing them.

Insights from the follow-up surveys

We compared how the childcare arrangements have changed over a six-month period for a group of parents who took part in both mainstage and the follow-up survey.

In Wave 2, 20% of parents changed their childcare arrangement between surveys. The most visible trend was the decrease in the proportion of parents relying on grandparents (32% in the first survey, 14% in the follow-up) and the increase of parents using school-based nurseries (4% in the first survey, 33% in the follow-up). There was also an increase in parents using childminders (from 13% in the first survey to 19% in the follow-up).

Figure 6: Types of childcare used by parents in the mainstage vs the follow-up survey (Wave 2)



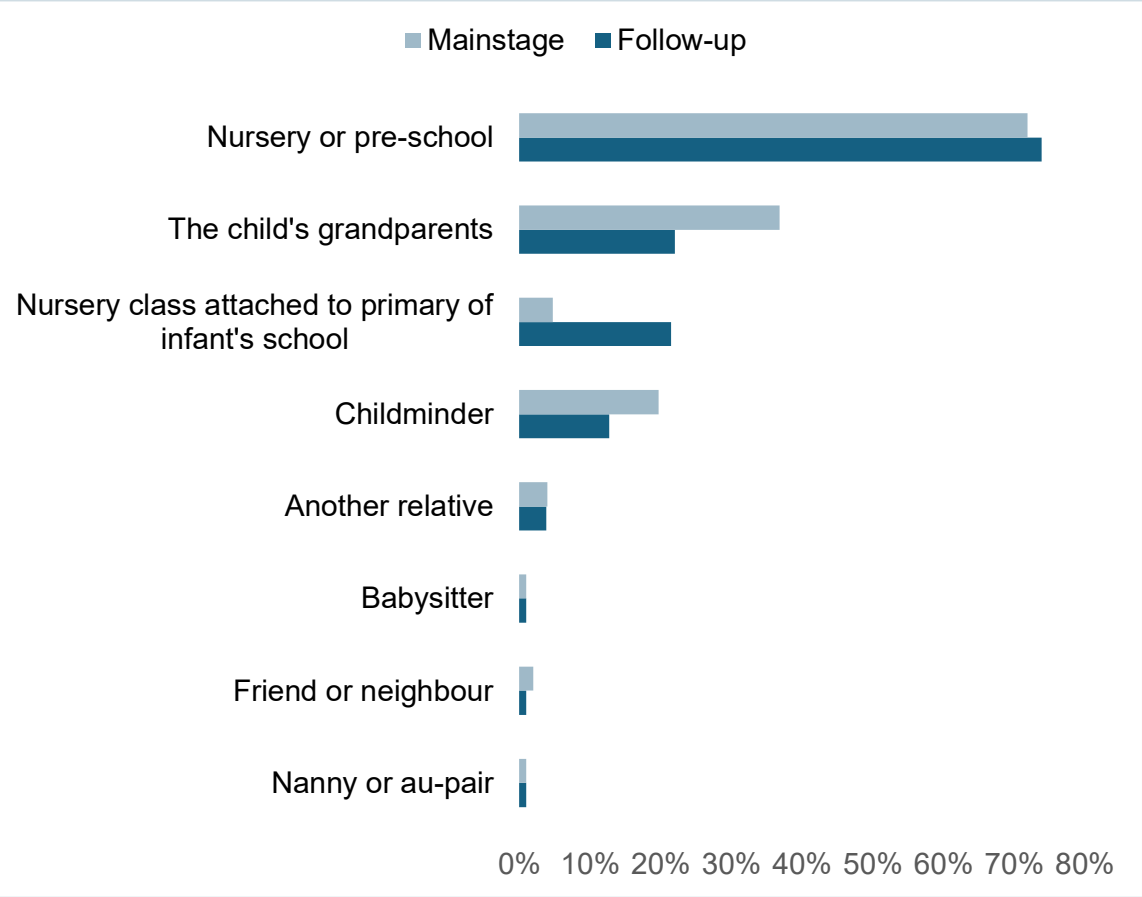
Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Wave 2 and Wave 2 follow up.

Base: The subset of parents who have filled out both the mainstage and the follow-up survey (n=2394). Respondents were able to select multiple answers.

Parents who changed their childcare arrangements were asked to indicate reasons for doing so. 29% of parents moved to a more convenient provider or changed providers due to the high cost of the previous setting (14%).

32% selected ‘other’ and submitted a text response to this question. Text analysis suggested reasons such as preparing the children for school, being unable to rely on informal arrangements (such as grandparents), or personal circumstances such as moving houses or jobs with a different schedule required for childcare.

Figure 7: Types of childcare used by parents in the mainstage vs the follow-up survey (Wave 3)



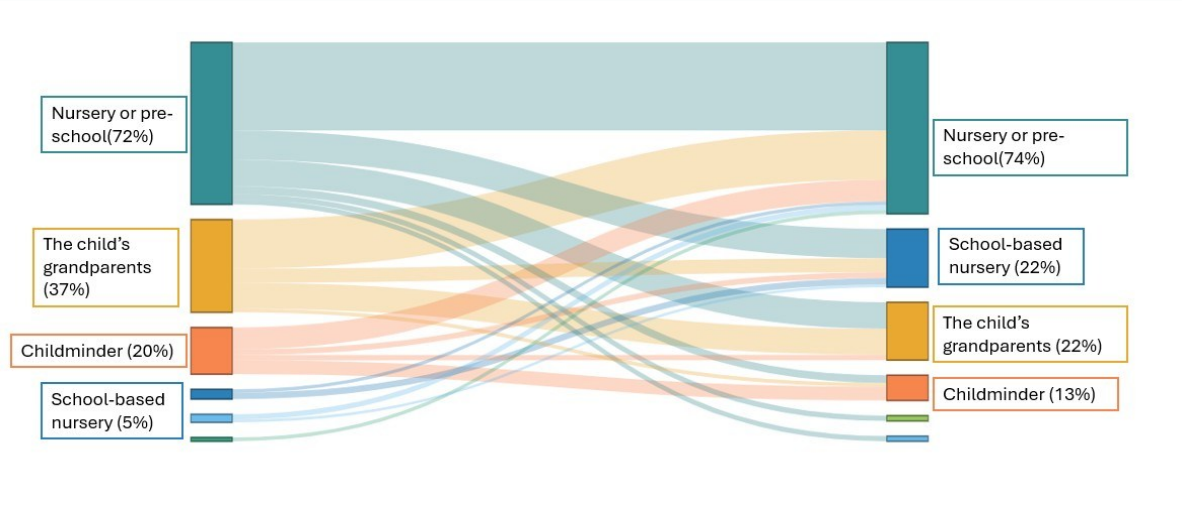
Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Wave 3 and Wave 3 follow up.

Base: The subset of parents who have filled out both the mainstage and the follow-up survey (3411). Respondents were able to select multiple answers.

In Wave 3 follow-up, 15% of respondents changed their child’s primary childcare arrangement. A similar pattern was observed, where fewer parents used their parents as the primary external childcare source (37% in the main survey, 22% in the follow-up) and more moved their child to a school-based nursery (5% in the main survey, 22% in the follow-up).

Reasons for the change were consistent with Wave 2, with most parents choosing to change their arrangement to better prepare their child for school, no longer being able to rely on grandparents or changes in personal circumstances. This was followed by 27% of parents moving to a more convenient provider and 14% of parents securing a place at their preferred provider.

Figure 8: Changes to childcare arrangements between Wave 3 mainstage and follow-up



Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Wave 3 and Wave 2 follow up.

Base: The subset of parents who have filled out both the mainstage and the follow-up survey (n=3,411).

This figure illustrates the changes in childcare arrangements used by parents in Wave 3 for all respondents of the follow-up survey-including those who did not change their arrangements. The left-hand side shows the most popular types of childcare used by parents when they first filled out the survey in the Summer of 2025, while the more recent childcare arrangements used by parents in Winter 2026 are shown on the right-hand side. The width of the lines in the middle reflects what proportion of children have moved from one arrangement to another.

For example, most children using nurseries or pre-schools remained in those settings. However, a large share of children are switching from informal childcare arrangements, such as grandparents' care towards formal arrangements such as nurseries, pre-schools or school-based nurseries.

How many hours children spend in formal childcare

Children of surveyed parents spent, on average, 23 hours per week in formal childcare. This trend varied by income groups: the higher the household earnings, the higher the typical number of childcare hours parents reported. For example, in Wave 3, children whose parents' income was less than £40,000 spent 18 hours in childcare per week on average, compared to 30 hours reported by parents with a household income of £100,000.

There were also regional differences in childcare use. Children in London spent the most time in formal childcare settings, typically 30 hours per week - 12 hours more than children in the North East (between 18 and 20 hours per week) and 10 more hours than children in the South West (20 hours per week).

Insights from the follow-up surveys

Looking at the cohort of parents who filled out the follow-up surveys, most increased the number of hours their child spent in formal childcare from around 23-24 hours in the first survey to 30 hours six months later.

Fees and charges

Additional costs

We asked parents whether they pay for additional hours on top of the 15 funded childcare hours they receive. In both surveys, 74% indicated paying for additional hours. On top of that, 54% of parents in Wave 2 and 57% of parents in Wave 3 indicated paying for additional charges.

Parents also indicated which fixed and optional charges they were paying for. The most common fixed charges were meals, drinks and snacks (between 71-72% parents were paying for those), followed by other consumables such as nappies or suncream (41-44%). Between 27-29% of parents were paying general extra charges which were sometimes unspecified.

For 'optional' charges, 60% of respondents selected 'other' and submitted their response in a free-text box. The text analysis of these comments revealed those charges to include early drop offs/late pick-ups, Breakfast Clubs and hours outside term-time. Some parents indicated being unsure what the charges they were paying for were.

During the collection of this data, statutory guidance for early years providers was updated in February 2025 to include the expectation that providers supply itemised invoices and publish the costs of chargeable extras on their websites by January 2026. This iteration of the statutory guidance also clarified the existing requirement that there must not be any mandatory charges in relation to the entitlements, and that providers cannot charge for certain costs, such as top-up fees, non-refundable registration fees or general charges.

Perception of changing costs

Around 6 in 10 parents whose child started formal childcare prior to accessing the 15-hour support indicated that their childcare costs had reduced since they started claiming the entitlement (64% in Wave 2 and 61% in Wave 3). In contrast, around 1 in 5 parents reported their childcare costs had risen (22% in Wave 2, 21% in Wave 3).

Table 2: Change in childcare costs reported by parents accessing formal childcare

	Wave 2	Wave 3
My childcare costs have increased	22%	21%
My childcare costs have stayed the same	14%	18%
My childcare costs have reduced	64%	61%

Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Wave 2 and 3.

Base: Respondents who indicated using formal childcare prior to claiming the 15-hour entitlement, who were accessing the entitlement at the time of the survey and who were using formal childcare. (n= 3108 in Wave 2, n= 2926 in Wave 3).

The change in childcare costs also depended on which providers parents used. Those using childminders were more likely to report a reduction in childcare costs (67-70%) than those using nurseries or pre-schools (60-62%).

Table 3: Change in childcare costs reported by parents by type of provider used

Type of childcare used	Childcare costs increased: Wave 2	Childcare costs increased: Wave 3	Childcare costs stayed the same: Wave 2	Childcare costs stayed the same: Wave 3	Childcare costs reduced: Wave 2	Childcare costs reduced: Wave 3
Nursery or pre-school	24%	23%	14%	18%	62%	60%
Childminder	10%	11%	16%	23%	73%	67%
Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school	20%	21%	17%	16%	64%	63%

Source: Childcare Experiences Survey, Wave 2 and 3.

Base: Respondents who indicated using formal childcare prior to claiming the 15-hour entitlement, who were accessing the entitlement at the time of the survey and who were using formal childcare. (n= 3108 in Wave 2, n=2926 in Wave 3).

Higher-income households were more likely to report a reduction in childcare costs since the introduction of the entitlement expansion. For example, in Wave 3, 65% of respondents with a household income of £100,000 or more reported a reduction. In contrast, 53% of the households with incomes of less than £20,000 reported a reduction. Lower income households (earning less than £20,000) were more likely to report their childcare costs had stayed the same (26% vs.17% of households earning £80,000 or more).

The change in childcare costs can depend on many factors, such as parents using more or less childcare than before, using a different provider or a change in childcare fees.

Insights from the follow-up surveys

We looked at whether the cost of childcare changed for participants six months after filling out the mainstage survey. In the cohort of parents who completed the follow-up survey for Wave 3, 60% in the mainstage survey indicated their childcare costs has reduced, for 21% it had increased, and for 19% it stayed the same. Among the same parents six months later, 54% said their cost of childcare stayed the same, for 28% it decreased and for 18% it increased.

Table 4: Change in childcare costs reported by parents: Wave 3 mainstage compared to the follow-up survey

Change in cost	Mainstage	Follow-up
My costs increased	21%	18%
My costs stayed the same	19%	54%
My costs reduced	60%	28%

Source: Childcare Experiences Survey Wave 3 main and follow-up survey. Base: a subset of parents who completed both the mainstage and the follow-up survey for Wave 3, who were using childcare prior to claiming the entitlement and who currently claim the entitlement (n= 2859).

The change in the cost can be a result of parents using more hours of childcare or relying on formal providers more than informal arrangements such as grandparents.

Among those who reported an increase to their childcare costs, 68% indicated that the provider they use increased their fees. This was followed by using more hours of childcare (26%) and having to pay more additional charges, such as nappies, meals and snacks (24%).

For those who reported a decrease in childcare costs, 71% of parents indicated that this was due to using funded hours. The text comments submitted as part of the ‘other’ option (selected by 24% of respondents) also pointed to a similar theme, with most saying that it was due to switching from using 15 funded-hours to 30 funded-hours.

Changes in respondents' employment patterns following the entitlement expansion

Changes in working patterns

Across both surveys, more respondents reported working part-time (47%) than full time (40-41%). Most (76-78%) respondents' partners worked full time at the time of the survey.

Change in the number of working hours

We asked parents whether their working hours have changed since they started claiming the working parent entitlement for their child. The results of this question were filtered on parents who were previously in work (i.e. not on maternity leave or unemployed). In both surveys, the majority of parents kept their working hours the same (65-66%). Between 12-13% reported an increase and between 19-21% saw a decrease in their working hours.

Changes in working hours by household income

Across the surveys, respondents from lower-income households were consistently more likely to report increasing their working hours than those from higher-income households. The proportion was highest among households earning less than £40,000 and lowest among those earning £80,000 or more. For example, in Wave 2, 19% of respondents with household incomes between £20,000-39,999 reported an increase in working hours compared to 7% of parents in the highest income group. Similarly, in Wave 3, 21% of parents in households earning less than £20,000 increased their working hours, compared with 8% of those in households earning £100,000 or more.

Change in working hours can occur for a variety of reasons, including switching from full-time to part-time working, having a child or changes in the workplace. This does not represent a causal impact of the entitlement.

Influence of the entitlement on the change in working hours

Parents who had changed their working hours since claiming the entitlement were asked to what extent the entitlement influenced their decision.

Among parents who increased their working hours, between 84 and 85% said the availability of the childcare entitlement had influenced their decision. More than half described it as very influential.

Even among parents who reduced their working hours, the entitlement appeared to influence this decision. In both surveys, around 64% reported that the entitlement was either very or somewhat influential.

The results from this question do not reflect the impact of the entitlement on the labour market. Rather, they indicate whether parents consider the availability of the entitlement when making decisions around work.

Insights from the follow-up surveys

Parents who agreed to complete the follow-up survey were asked the question about the change in their working hours again, this time referring to the period in-between the two surveys (i.e. in the last 6 months). In the follow-up to Wave 2, while the vast majority of parents did not change their working hours (77%), more reported increasing their working hours (17%) than decreasing (4%).

When asked to indicate the reason for the change, those who increased their working hours did so due to taking on more hours or starting a new job (50%) or a change in personal circumstances, such as financial need or career goals (20%).

Among the 130 respondents who reduced their working hours between the mainstage and follow-up survey, 38% did so to spend more time with their child. Responses submitted via text comments also indicated increased childcare responsibilities, study, reduced hours imposed by their employer and seasonal work as common reasons.

A similar pattern was observed in the follow-up to Wave 3. 15% of respondents who took part both in the main survey and the follow up survey for Wave 3 indicated changing their working hours in the 6 months between the surveys (15% of the sample). Out of those, more increased (13%) then decreased (4%) their working hours, while 83% of respondents kept the hours the same.

Respondents who had changed their working hours in Wave 3 (1,890 parents in Wave 3) were asked about their reasons for doing so. Among those who increased their hours, the most common reasons were taking on additional hours or starting a new job (53%), followed by changes in personal circumstances, such as financial needs or career goals (22%). Among those who reduced their hours, the most common reason was wanting to spend more time with their child (43%), followed by moving into a job or role with fewer working hours (27%).

Future plans

Parents were asked about their intentions to change the amount of childcare they use once the 30-hour entitlement became available in September 2025.

44% of parents in Wave 2 and 45% in Wave 3 intended to increase the number of hours their child spends in childcare. A similar proportion of parents indicated they do not plan on changing the number of hours their child spends in childcare (42% in Wave 2 and 45% in Wave 3).

Table 5: Whether parents plan on changing the amount of hours their child spends in childcare from September 2025

	Wave 2	Wave 3
No, I do not plan to change the number of hours	42%	45%
Yes, I intend to increase the number of hours	44%	45%
I don't know whether I will change the number of hours	14%	10%
Yes, I intend to decrease the number of hours	1%	1%

Source: Childcare Experiences Survey Waves 2 and 3.

Base: Parents who were using formal childcare for their child at the time of the survey (n=5241 in Wave 2, n=5978 in Wave 3).

Increasing working hours was consistently the most common reason for intending to use more childcare. This was more common among lower-income households: the difference was greatest in Wave 3, when 67% of parents in the lowest-income households intended to increase their working hours, compared with 54% of those in households earning £100,000 or more.

Supporting their child's development was another important reason parents intended to use more childcare. 49% of parents in Wave 2 and 45% of parents in Wave 3 indicated this to be a decisive factor in changing their childcare hours.

Insights from the follow-up surveys

We were able to check whether parents followed through on their intention to use more childcare in the follow-up survey for Wave 3, which was collected after the expansion of the entitlement to 30 hours. The results revealed that parents did use more childcare hours on average. Looking at the same population, the typical number of childcare hours parents increased from 23 to 30 per week.

Conclusions

Results from the Childcare Experiences Survey show that parents who applied for the 15-hour Working Families Childcare Entitlement generally found the application process straightforward and were able to claim the entitlement. Across both survey waves, around eight in ten parents found the application process easy to follow.

Most parents who used the entitlement were able to secure a childcare place with their preferred provider and reported high levels of satisfaction with their provider's opening hours, available days and available weeks. Nevertheless, finding and accessing childcare remained challenging for some families. Waiting lists were commonly reported and were particularly prevalent among parents who had applied for, but were not yet claiming, the entitlement. Parents also highlighted difficulties finding affordable childcare that met individual needs.

The findings suggest that affordability continues to be an important concern for many parents. Fewer than half of respondents considered childcare affordable for their family, and affordability was one of the most commonly cited challenges when securing a childcare place. At the same time, many parents reported that their childcare costs had reduced since they began claiming the entitlement and perceptions of affordability improved among respondents who completed follow-up surveys later, when many were accessing the expanded 30-hour entitlement.

Although most parents were satisfied with their childcare arrangements, some reported restrictions on how funded hours could be used and many paid for additional hours or additional charges alongside the entitlement. Meals, consumables and other provider charges were commonly reported. Since this research was conducted, updated statutory guidance has strengthened expectations around transparency of charges and the provision of itemised invoices.

The survey also highlighted how childcare arrangements change as children get older. Follow-up surveys showed increasing use of formal childcare and school-based provision over time, alongside declining reliance on informal care such as grandparents. Parents most commonly cited preparing children for school, convenience and affordability when explaining these changes.

Most parents reported no change in their working hours after claiming the entitlement and parents were slightly more likely to decrease their working hours than increase them. Parents who changed their working hours frequently reported that the entitlement had influenced their decisions, suggesting that funded childcare is one of the many factors considered when making employment choices. However, these changes should not be interpreted as evidence of the impact of the entitlement, as working patterns commonly change following the arrival of a child and are shaped by a range of other factors.

Overall, the findings suggest that the entitlement is being used by most parents who apply for it and is supporting access to childcare for many families. It helped many families manage childcare costs and formed part of parents' decisions about work and childcare.

However, challenges relating to affordability, childcare availability, waiting lists, provider restrictions and additional charges remained important features of parents' childcare experiences.

Appendix A: Technical Note

Methodology and Analysis: main surveys

Sampling

Issued Sample

DfE worked with His Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to access the sample data via existing legislation. Each survey wave targets a specific cohort, requiring a new sample to be drawn for each wave. These cohorts include all parents applying for new codes used to claim the entitlement in the three months prior to the cut-off points for when their child is eligible to start using the entitlement support.

All parents had a live Child Benefit (ChB) claim, and the child they were claiming for was aged 9 months to 2 years at the time of sampling. A stratified random sample was taken from a base population of those eligible.

Table 1: Sampling for Waves 1 to 3

Wave	Eligibility	Obtained from HMRC	Sample	Base population
1 - pilot	Parents applied for the working families' childcare entitlement between 1st May-31st August 2024 (for their child to start childcare from September 2024). Child claimed for born between 31st August 2021 and 30th November 2023.	September 2024	39,970	347,894
2	Parents applied for the working families' childcare entitlement between 1st September -31st December 2024 (for their child to start childcare from January 2025). Child claimed for born between 31st December 2021 and 31st March 2024.	January 2025	40,000	360,000
3	Parents had applied for working families' childcare entitlement between 1st December 2024 –31st March 2025 (child to start childcare from April 2025) Child claimed for born between 31st March 2022 and 30th June 2024.	June 2025	40,000	308,000

Postal addresses on ChB records were matched to data on Childcare Services to establish the base population. Given the high take-up of the Child Benefit Record (CBR), this provides high coverage of dependent children in England, although it is likely that higher-income households (those where one or both partners earn £60,000 or more per year) are not included in the sample (see the Limitations of the data section for more information).

The Wave 1 pilot did not collect geographical data, and the sample was not weighted by economic activity or geographical data in the analysis. This limitation means the findings may not fully represent the broader population, potentially leading to biases in the results. Future waves captured regional distribution and economic activity.

From Wave 2, a stratified sampling approach was used to ensure that all geographical regions were represented. Secure Customer Records were removed from the base

population prior to sampling. The issued sample was stratified by region; the targets were based on proportion of codes issued to each region within England. To ensure a higher representation of parents in lower-income areas, a sample boost was applied in regions with a high economic inactivity rate[1], particularly in the northern regions which may be experiencing a shortage of childcare. Economic inactivity was used as a proxy for deprivation, as the Index of Multiple Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) was considered out of date.

The sample was shared via HMRC Secure Data Exchange Service (SDES), now called Transfer files securely with HMRC. Each sample file was downloaded and kept for 8 weeks as per the Memorandum of Understanding between HMRC and DfE for this data share. Only the immediate team members had access to the file, which was password protected. Files were securely destroyed after this time.

Achieved sample

Table 2. Achieved sample for Waves 1 to 3

Wave	Number of respondents	Response rate
1	6,612	17%
2	6,112	15%
3	6,590	17%

91% of Wave 1 and Wave 2 respondents were female. In Wave 3, 90% of respondents were female.

Respondents who received the invite letter but have not received a childcare code for the entitlement were screened out of the survey after the first question. Respondents who did not finish the survey or who provided invalid postcode data were excluded from analysis.

Fieldwork

Parents were contacted by letter inviting them to take part in the survey. All invitation letters gave details on how to take part in the online survey, with a link and a QR code. Parents were provided with an email address that they could use to contact the team if they experienced any difficulties. The letter also contained a unique access code to complete the survey.

The survey was conducted using a 15–20-minute online questionnaire using Qualtrics.

The three waves asked about parents' experiences of applying for and accessing the working families' entitlement of 15 hours of funded childcare per week.

[1] https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/indicators/economic-inactivity-rate

Table 3: Fieldwork dates for Waves 1 to 3

Wave	Fieldwork dates
1	30 October 2024 – 6 December 2024
2	1 March 2025 – 10 April 2025
3	23 June 2025 – 19 August 2025

If a parent had more than one child eligible for the survey, the oldest child they were claiming the working families entitlement for was selected.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to provide their name, email address and phone number if they consented to take part in the planned follow up survey, approximately six months later. In Wave 1, 5,980 respondents consented to this. In Wave 2, 5,479 respondents consented to this. In Wave 3, 5,910 respondents agreed to be re-contacted.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire covered the following topic areas:

Household characteristics:

- Types of families (e.g. number of children, socio-economic status, location, lone/dual parented, etc.) using the expanded childcare entitlements.
- Types of jobs parents/carers using the expanded childcare entitlements hold, and how they differ from families' ineligible for expanded entitlements childcare.
- Types of childcare families use (Informal, formal, or both).

Applying for childcare:

- Motivations for parents to apply for the expanded childcare entitlements.
- Experiences of parents of applying for support with childcare via Childcare Choice.
- Reasons some parents applied for a code but did not go on to use the childcare.

Finding and using childcare:

- Experiences of parents in finding an appropriate place for their child.
- How access to provision differs between different types of families.
- How parents/carers feel about the childcare they currently use. How do they meet their needs and expectations, and whether this differs by family type.
- What parents/carers use the time for while their children are in childcare.

Provider fees and charges:

- What fees providers charge. What these fees cover. Whether this was by choice, e.g. additional hours.
- What extra charges are parents paying for consumables (i.e. nappies, food, activities, etc).
- How much a typical family pays towards childcare each month.
- Perception of how affordable childcare is.

Employment:

- How parents' intentions towards their own employment have changed from before their child was born.
- How the expanded entitlements have affected parents' decisions to stay at home or start/return to work.
- To what extent childcare costs have affected parents' decisions to keep or change their work circumstances to be eligible for the expanded entitlements.

Family outcomes:

- Looking forward, what the parents' intentions are around childcare.
- What future intentions are around employment.
- Parents' views on the number of hours their child currently spends in childcare.
- How parents feel about their children's wellbeing and development.

The questionnaire was mostly multiple choice, with some open-text questions for participants to express answers in their own words.

Following the pilot phase (Wave 1), several amendments were made to the questionnaire prior to its use in Waves 2 and 3. These included the development of code frames from pilot open-text responses and the conversion of selected open-text questions into multiple-choice questions, improving response efficiency and reducing the likelihood of respondents inadvertently providing personal data. Question wording was refined to improve clarity and updated to reflect the relevant dates for the new cohort. Upper numeric limits for selected open-text questions were also revised to reduce the occurrence of unrealistic outlier responses.

Where questions changed between waves, readers should not look to compare results from Wave 1 to Wave 2 and Wave 3. This is further exacerbated by the introduction of weighted data. For this reason, this report will focus on results from Wave 2 and Wave 3 of the study.

Analysis

The survey script ensured that the correct routing was followed throughout the questionnaire and applied range checks, which prevented invalid values from being entered.

Descriptive statistics were taken from Stats IQ on Qualtrics. The full set of survey responses were downloaded from Qualtrics and imported into RStudio. An R Script was created for analysis of the data.

Some variables with multiple response options were grouped:

- Household income (from £10k bands into £20k bands)
- Less common employment statuses of respondent and partner before the arrival of their child and at the time of the survey were grouped into an "Other" category, which was not reported on
- Weekly childcare hours used was grouped into ranges (except for mean/median calculations)

The following derived variables were created:

- The flag for whether parents look after any children with SEND: this was set to "has SEND children" if any of a parent's children had special educational needs, a disability, or both (collectively denoted SEND). If all of a parent's children explicitly had no SEND, the flag was set to "no SEND children". Otherwise, the flag was considered unknown (including instances of "prefer not to say" for any children) and excluded from calculations involving SEND breakdowns.
- The age of the oldest child claimed for: for the majority of parents who only claimed entitlements for 1 child, this was that child's age. For parents who claimed for multiple children, it was the age of the oldest.

Data tables aggregating survey results for the desired demographic breakdowns were generated in RStudio.

Weighting

From Wave 2, survey weights were applied to ensure that the achieved sample more closely reflected the geographic distribution of all eligible parents. The weighting corrected for deliberate oversampling in certain regions, which had been introduced at the sampling stage to facilitate regional breakdowns of the findings across England.

The survey sample was drawn from HMRC records of parents who had applied for the expanded childcare entitlement and were in receipt of Child Benefit (ChB). To ensure data quality, cases where the address recorded in Child Benefit data did not match the most recent address in Childcare Services records were excluded from the sampling frame. Regional weights were then calculated using the 363,545 parents whose records were successfully matched across both datasets. Consequently, the weighted survey estimates are representative of this matched population, rather than the full population of parents

who validated a code for the 15-hour childcare entitlement. As a result, the weighted population is a smaller subset of the overall eligible population.

Regional margins

Final weights were applied based on an extract provided by HMRC based on customers in both ChB and funded hours, children of target age, applications between target dates, matching current addresses only, families with deceased children removed.

Limitation of weighting approach

Due to legal restrictions on data sharing, HMRC can only provide records for parents who have applied for expanded childcare entitlements and are in receipt of Child Benefit (ChB). Cases where the address recorded in the ChB data did not match the most recent address held in the Childcare Services data were excluded. As a result, the weighted population used for analysis represents only those records that could be successfully matched across the two datasets, equivalent to 33% of the original ChB extract. Therefore, all estimated numbers presented in this publication are based on this matched population rather than the wider population of parents who validated codes for the childcare entitlement.

Interpreting the data

Bases

The total base figures include all respondents who were routed to a specific question. Thus, while the base description (e.g. respondents who look after children with SEND) may be the same across several data tables, the base sizes may differ slightly due to the exclusion of cases with missing data (those who did not answer the question).

Weighted percentages are presented throughout the report.

In some tables, the column or row percentages may not add up to the total base size, such as the counts per demographic group not summing to the total number who answered the question. This means some respondents to that question did not indicate their demographic group.

Where the base size is fewer than 50 respondents, estimates should be interpreted with caution, as the associated confidence intervals are likely to be wide. Instances where this applies are identified in the footnotes beneath the relevant tables.

Percentages

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100 percent. This also applies to questions where more than one answer can be given. Weighted percentages are presented throughout to ensure the results reflect the population structure, particularly by region.

Limitations of the data

Response rates

The response rates for Waves 1, 2 and 3 ranged from 15-17%. This is broadly in line with, or higher than, other online surveys. The relatively low response rate increases the risk of non-response bias. The addition of data weighting from Wave 2 may help to correct some of this bias resulting from observable characteristics.

Non-coverage bias

It is likely that some higher-income households are not represented in the sample. Since changes to Child Benefit eligibility were introduced in 2013, households in which one or both partners earn £60,000 or more per year have received little or no financial benefit from claiming Child Benefit. As a result, these households are disproportionately likely to be missing from the Child Benefit Register (CBR). Because the CBR is the sole sampling frame used for this study, this introduces a non-coverage bias and limits the extent to which the survey findings can be considered representative of all working families eligible for the funded childcare entitlement. No equivalent data source exists for higher-income families, and this is therefore a recognised limitation of the study.

Follow-up surveys: methodology and analysis

For each mainstage survey, respondents were asked whether they would be happy to be re-contacted in 6 months' time to complete a follow-up survey to measure any changes to their experience and opinions regarding their childcare use and working patterns.

The follow-up survey was sent out by email to those who opted in around 6 months after the mainstage survey closed.

Respondents received a £10 EdenRed voucher from DfE after completing the follow-up survey as a thank you for their time.

Study design

Research Aims

The aim of the follow up survey is to assess the changes and impacts experienced by working parents since they started using the expanded childcare entitlements.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the experiences of parents using the expanded entitlements in finding suitable childcare places; to identify common issues and key differences.
2. To explore the potential barriers to finding and using suitable childcare for families both eligible and ineligible for the new entitlements.
3. To explore the experiences of parents applying for the expanded entitlements through Childcare Choices website (later: Best Start in Life)

4. To understand any changes in family and employment outcomes after the first six months following applying for the expanded entitlements.
5. To understand the experiences of parents in paying fees and additional charges for childcare.

Questionnaire

The follow-up survey questionnaire was based on the mainstage survey and repeated a number of questions to enable comparisons over time.
Parents were asked about their experiences of claiming childcare support for the same child referenced in the mainstage survey, with responses linked to the earlier survey data.

The survey focused on changes in parents' circumstances since the mainstage survey. As in the mainstage survey, questions covered experiences of applying for and accessing childcare, childcare use, fees and charges, and employment.

Broadly, the follow-up survey sought to capture changes in:

- **Applying for and accessing childcare:** whether parents' experiences of claiming government childcare support had changed during the previous six months.
- **Fees and charges:** whether parents' experiences of paying for childcare had changed during the previous six months, including the amount typically spent on childcare and the fees charged by providers.
- **Employment:** whether parents' employment circumstances had changed during the previous six months.
- **Future plans:** parents' intentions and plans relating to their child starting school.

Sample size

The sample sizes for the follow-up surveys were a proportion of the achieved sample of the mainstage survey.

Table 4: Sample sizes for Waves 1 to 3 follow-up surveys

Follow-up Wave	Sample size	Percentage of mainstage survey responses
1	3,933	59%
2	2,441	40%
3	3,454	52%

The data was stored securely and was being kept for 12 months after the follow-up survey.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the follow up surveys began in May 2025, approximately 6 months after the Wave 1 mainstage survey closed.

Table 5: Follow-up survey fieldwork dates

Follow-up wave	Fieldwork dates
1	May 2025 – July 2025
2	September 2025 – December 2025
3	February 2026 – March 2026

Household characteristics of the survey participants

Household characteristics were similar across all three surveys. In all three surveys, on average 9 in 10 (90%) respondents were female and 98% of respondents were living with a partner.

Around 45% of respondents in each survey reported having two children. Most children were 1 year old or 2 years old at the time of the survey. A similar proportion of parents had only one child (45%) compared to those who had two children (44%). 11% of parents had three or more children.

Respondents were asked to select their total household income before tax. This was grouped into categories.

Most respondents reported their household income to be between £60,000 and £79,999 per year. The distribution of participants in each income band was the following:

- Less than £20,000: 5% of the sample
- £20,000-39,999: 11% of the sample.
- £40,000-59,999: 23% of the sample.
- £60,000-79,999: 26% of the sample.
- £80,000-99,999: 22% of the sample.
- £100,000 or more: 13% of the sample.

Disability and caring responsibilities

Around 3% of parents in each wave reported having a disability. Around a quarter of these parents indicated that it impacts their ability to work.

Around 2 in 10 surveyed parents reported having additional caring responsibilities for other people in their household over the age of 18. Among those parents, around 3 in 10 reported that caring responsibilities affect their ability to work.

In each survey, around 7% of respondents reported caring for a child with Special Educational Needs (SEND). Among those, between 8% and 20% reported that caring for those children impacts their ability to work a great deal. More parents (between 14% and 27%) reported that having children with SEND impacts their ability to work a moderate amount, and between 27% and 35% selected ‘a little’ to answer this question.

Because the questionnaire did not control for whether the child identified as having a Special Educational Need or disability is the child the entitlement is claimed for, this report does not cover any possible differences in accessing and using the entitlement that parents with those children might have experienced.

Appendix B: Questionnaires

Childcare Experiences Survey – Wave 2 and 3 Questionnaire

Start of Block: Introduction

Welcome to the Department for Education's Childcare Experiences Survey. Thank you for agreeing to take part. The survey should take around 10-15 minutes to complete. We are keen to understand your experiences with applying to access the funded childcare hours entitlement for working families. We would also value your perspective on using childcare providers in your area and how your childcare and employment arrangements work for you and your family.

You have been invited to participate in this survey because you have recently applied for the working parents' childcare entitlement. Your responses will help us understand how parents experience accessing childcare and government childcare entitlements. Findings will inform how we deliver future government childcare policies in England to meet the needs of families like yours. Participation is voluntary. All information you give us will be treated as confidential and reported anonymously. No one will be able to identify you from our reports.

Reports will be published on GOV.UK. If you would like a link to the final report when it is available, please email the team inbox at Your.CHILDCARE@Education.gov.uk. You can view our privacy notice here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/privacy-information-parents-carers-and-legal-guardians .

Our standard privacy notice states that we may collect your full name, email address and phone number. Your full name, email address and phone number will only be collected if you agree to participate in the follow-up research for the purposes of contacting you to participate.

To navigate the survey, please use the 'Next' and 'Back' buttons. Do not worry if you accidentally close the survey as your responses are automatically saved. You can return to the survey at any time by following the survey link.

By completing this survey and providing us with your contact details, you will give us consent to re-contact you for a follow-up survey in six months' time to understand whether your experiences with childcare have changed since this survey.

We obtained your contact details (name and address) from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) under paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 to the Tax Credits Act 2002, and the Tax Credits (Provision of Information) (Evaluation and Statistical Studies) Regulations 2003 '(SI 2003/3308) HMRC has power to supply information to other Departments for the purposes of evaluation or statistical studies relating to the provision and use of childcare.'. If you have any questions about the research, or issues completing the survey please contact Your.CHILDCARE@Education.gov.uk.

HMRC records have indicated that you have received a childcare code for at least one of your children aged 9 months to 2 years to receive funded childcare hours under the working families entitlement. Is this correct (even if you have not taken up the offer)? (The working families entitlement offer is 15 hours funded childcare for eligible working families from September 2024. This offer is available for children from the term after they turn 9 months old until the term that they turn 3 years old.)

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If HMRC records have indicated that you have received a childcare code for at least one of your children = No

Thank you for your time. Unfortunately, you are out of scope for this study.

Skip To: End of Survey If Thank you for your time. Unfortunately, you are out of scope for this study. Displayed

End of Block: Introduction

Start of Block: Section 1 - Household Characteristics

Household Characteristics We will start by asking you some questions about you and your household – including basic information about yourself, and those you live with including children.

Which of the following do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Can you confirm the first half of your postcode? For example if your postcode is SW1P 3BT, enter SW1P.

_____

How many people over the age of 18 usually live at your current address? (including yourself)

_____

How many children under the age of 18 usually live at your current address?

_____

Do you have any disabilities?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Do you have any disabilities?* = Yes

Does your disability affect your ability to work?

o Yes

o No

o Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *If How many people over the age of 18 usually live at your current address? (including yourself)* Text Response Is Greater Than or Equal to 2

Do you have caring responsibilities for other people in your household over the age of 18?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Do you have caring responsibilities for other people in your household over the age of 18?* = Yes

Does your caring responsibility affect your ability to work?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

What are the first names of the children living at your current address?

Display this choice:

If *How many children under the age of 18 usually live at your current address?* Text Response Is Greater Than or Equal to 1

o Child 1 Name _____[2]

What are the ages of the children living at your current address?

Display this choice:

If *What are the first names of the children living at your current address?* Text Response Is Not Empty

${CHILD'S NAME/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} Less than 1 month ... 17 years[3]

Which children, if any, in your household have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?

Display this choice:

If *What are the first names of the children living at your current address?* Text Response Is Not Empty

Display this choice:

If What are the first names of the children living at your current address? Text Response Is Not Empty

${CHILD'S NAME/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [drop-down list: Special Education Need/ Disability /Special Education Need and Disability / Prefer not to say]

Display this question:

If *Which children, if any, in your household have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?* = Special Educational Need

Or *Which children, if any, in your household have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?* = Disability

[2] Entry repeated for any additional children as indicated by respondent
[3] Entry repeated for any additional children as indicated by respondent

Or *Which children, if any, in your household have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?* = Special Educational Need and Disability

To what extent, if any, does caring for this/these child/ren with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities affect your ability to work?

- A great deal
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all
- Prefer not to say

Have you applied for the working families childcare entitlement for the following children in your household aged 9 months to 2 years? Please indicate yes or no using the dropdown boxes provided.

Display this choice:

If What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [9 months]

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [10 months]

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [11 months]

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [1 year]

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [2 years]

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [3 years]

${CHILD'S NAME/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} Yes /No

Which child is the oldest child you have applied for the working families' entitlement for? If only one child is shown, please select that child below. If you have multiple children of the same age (for example, twins), please select one of the children.

Display this choice:

If *Have you applied for the working families childcare entitlement for the following children* in you... = ${q://QID14/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} [Yes]

o ${CHILD'S NAME/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1[4]}

We will now ask you questions about your experiences of finding and using childcare for ${ENTCHD2/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}[5].

End of Block: Section 1 - Household Characteristics

[4] Logic repeated for any additional children indicated by the participant

[5] What the participants saw in the survey was the name of their child that that they applied for the 15-hour entitlement for at the time of the survey. This box will be referred to as Child's Name for the purpose of clarity of this questionnaire.

Start of Block: Section 2 - Applying for Childcare

Applying for, and finding Childcare We want to understand your experiences with applying for and claiming childcare offers that the government provides for Child's Name You can find out about the childcare options available to you to help pay for your childcare at https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The application process for the working families childcare entitlement was easy to follow"

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Display this question:

If *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The application process fo...* = Disagree

Or *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The application process fo...* = Strongly disagree

What were the main challenges you experienced when applying for the working families' childcare entitlements? Please tick all that apply.

- Understanding what I was entitled to and/or if I was eligible
- The deadlines to apply were unclear
- Knowing how/where I should apply
- Navigating the website/application portal
- Understanding the language used in the application process
- I was unsure on how to apply when I am already receiving other benefits, e.g. Universal Credit Childcare or Tax-Free Childcare
- Accessing the support I needed to complete my application (for example, help-lines)
- None of the above
- Other [Please Specify]
  _____

Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name?

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If *Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for* [Child's Name] = No

Which of the following are reasons why you have not used your working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name?

Please tick all that apply.

- I couldn't find childcare that met our family's needs (for example, working patterns)
- I couldn't find a childcare provider where I could use the entitlement
- I did not think the childcare provider would be able to meet my child's special educational needs and/or disabilities (if applicable)
- I had difficulties claiming my code
- It does not make childcare more affordable for me
- I am waiting for a place for my child to become available
- The childcare I use is not eligible for the entitlement (for example, employing a nanny, informal childcare through friends and family)
- The childcare offered was not flexible enough for my needs
- I wasn't able to afford additional costs
- My current provider doesn't allow me to use the entitlement
- My child will start childcare next term
- There were no suitable providers to meet my child's needs
- I chose alternative provision not eligible for the funded hours (e.g. informal care, such as grandparents)
- None of the above
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If *Which of the following are reasons why you have not used your working families childcare entitlement.* = I couldn't find childcare that met our family's needs (for example, working patterns)

In what ways did the childcare available not meet your family's needs? Please tick all that apply.

- Provider drop-off/pick-up timings did not suit my work or personal preferences
- Providers had restrictions on how and when I could use the funded hours (e.g. fixed hours or days)
- The provider I wanted was not eligible to offer the funded hours (e.g. nannies)
- There was a lack of available places for my child
- None of the above

- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If *Which of the following are reasons why you have not used your working families childcare entitlement* = I couldn't find childcare that met our family's needs (for example, working patterns)

Or *Which of the following are reasons why you have not used your working families childcare entitlement* = I couldn't find a childcare provider where I could use the entitlement

Did you notify your local authority about not being able to use your working families childcare entitlement?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Which of the following are reasons why you have not used your working families childcare entitlement* = I had difficulties claiming my code

What difficulties did you have when claiming your code?

- I missed the deadline to submit my claim for the current term and/or my child will start childcare next term
- The eligibility criteria was unclear
- I was unsure whether could claim both the working families entitlement and other benefits at the same time e.g. Universal Credit
- There was a delay in receiving the code
- The process of reconfirming my code was unclear/difficult
- My eligibility status changed
- My provider couldn't offer me the funded hours
- None of the above
- Other [Please Specify]
  _____

Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name

- Nursery or pre-school
- Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school
- Childminder
- Nanny or au pair
- Babysitter

- The child's grandparent(s)
- The child's older brother/sister
- Another relative
- A friend or neighbour
- My child is not receiving childcare

Display this question:

If *Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for [Child Name]*= Yes

For Child's Name, what type of childcare do you claim the majority of your entitlement hours on?

- Nursery or pre-school
- Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school
- Childminder

Which other types of formal childcare (paid for, e.g. nurseries, pre-school, childminders) did you consider when choosing childcare for Child's Name? Tick all that apply

- Nursery or pre-school
- Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school
- Childminder
- Nanny or au pair
- None of the above

Display this question:

If *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name]* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name]* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name]* = Childminder

Were you able to get a childcare place for Child's Name at your first choice of provider?

- Yes
- No

Was Child's Name placed on a waiting list before you could access your entitlement place or are they currently on a waiting list (if you are not claiming the entitlement currently)?

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name]!= Nursery or pre-school

And Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name]!= Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

And Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name] != Childminder

And Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name] != Nanny or au pair

And Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for [Child Name] != Babysitter

Why do you typically not use formal childcare (paid for, e.g. nurseries, pre-school, childminders) for Child's Name? Please tick all that apply.

- I would prefer to wait until my child is older
- I have family members for childcare
- My child has specific health and/or special needs
- Flexible work arrangements allow me to care for my child
- There were no available places in my preferred setting
- I was not comfortable with my local provider options
- Formal childcare is too expensive
- None of the above
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If *Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name* = Yes

When finding a childcare place for Child's Name, which of these challenges, if any, did you experience? Please tick all that apply.

- Accessing government guidance for childcare offers
- Understanding guidance for childcare offers
- Finding suitable childcare for my child which met my preferences
- Securing a place at my preferred provider (for example, I was put on a waiting list)
- Finding childcare that is affordable for me
- The childcare provider had difficulty validating the code given to me

- Finding childcare that's a suitable distance away
- I encountered no challenges
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for [Child Name] = Yes

Are there any restrictions from your main childcare provider about when you can use your funded childcare hours?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Display this question:

If *Are there any restrictions from your main childcare provider about when you can use your funded childcare hours?* = Yes

What are the restrictions on when you can use your funded childcare hours? Tick all that apply

- I can only use the hours for full days
- I can only use the hours before and/or after a certain time of day
- I can only use the hours at certain times of day (e.g. in the morning)
- I can only use the hours on certain days of the week
- I can only use the entitlements if my child is in the childcare provider for more than 15 hours per week
- I can only use a certain number of hours per day (e.g. only 6 hours per day)
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Do you use Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) for Child's Name?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for ... = Yes

And Do you use Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) for ${q://QID88/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}? = Yes

Will you change the amount of Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) you use alongside the funded 15 hours that you receive?

- Yes, I will be increasing the amount of TFC I use
- Yes, I will be decreasing the amount of TFC I use
- No, I will not be changing the amount of TFC I use
- Don't know

End of Block: Section 2 - Applying for Childcare

Start of Block: Section 3 - Using Childcare

We want to understand how you currently use childcare for Child's Name

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

What influenced your decision to use formal childcare (paid for, e.g. nurseries, pre-school, childminders) for Child's Name? Tick all that apply

- I think it is important for my child's physical development
- I think it is important for my child's social development
- I think it is important for my child's emotional development
- It allows me to spend more time with my other children
- It enables me to work
- It enables me to work more hours than I would otherwise
- It allows me to spend more time doing things without my children
- I can now afford it
- I am no longer able to work from home
- It enables my partner to work
- It enables my partner to work more hours than they would otherwise
- None of the above
- Other (Please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

During a standard term-time week, in total, how many hours does Child's Name spend in formal childcare, while you are working or have other regular commitments? Please include both government funded and hours you may pay for.

_____

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

How satisfied are you with the number of childcare hours on offer at your main childcare provider?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Display this question:

If How satisfied are you with the number of childcare hours on offer at your main childcare provider? = Dissatisfied

Or How satisfied are you with the number of childcare hours on offer at your main childcare provider? = Very dissatisfied

Why are you dissatisfied with the number of childcare hours you are offered from your main childcare provider? Tick all that apply

- Not enough hours were offered per day
- Not enough hours were offered per week
- The hours offered cannot be used on my preferred days
- The hours offered do not reflect my preferred times
- My provider does not allow for flexibility in changing the number of hours my child can attend
- Other (please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

And If

Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name = Yes

Did Child's Name start in formal (paid for) childcare before you started claiming working families entitlements?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Did Child's Name start in formal (paid for) childcare before you started claiming the entitlement* = Yes

Have Child's Name's number of childcare hours changed since you started claiming working families' entitlements?

- Yes, the hours have increased
- Yes, the hours have decreased
- No, the hours have not changed

Display this question:

If Have Child's Name's number of childcare hours changed since you started... = Yes, the hours have increased

Or Have Child's Name's number of childcare hours changed since you started... = Yes, the hours have decreased

Was this change influenced by the introduction of the working families childcare entitlement?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

How satisfied are you with the opening and closing times of your main childcare provider?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Display this question:

If *How satisfied are you with the opening and closing times of your main childcare provider?* = Dissatisfied

Or *How satisfied are you with the opening and closing times of your main childcare provider?* = Very dissatisfied

Why are you dissatisfied with the opening and closing times of your main childcare provider? Please tick all that apply

- My provider doesn't open as early as I want
- My provider doesn't close as late as I want
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

How satisfied are you with the days that your main childcare provider can offer you each week?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Display this question:

If *How satisfied are you with the days that your main childcare provider can offer you each week?* = Dissatisfied

Or *How satisfied are you with the days that your main childcare provider can offer you each week?* = Very dissatisfied

Why are you dissatisfied with the days you are offered from your main childcare provider?

- Days offered don't match my working patterns
- My provider doesn't allow me to change the days I use
- My provider doesn't offer the number of days I want
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Childminder

How satisfied are you with the number of weeks that your main childcare provider can offer you per year?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

Display this question:

If *How satisfied are you with the number of weeks that your main childcare provider can offer you per year* = Very dissatisfied

Or *How satisfied are you with the number of weeks that your main childcare provider can offer you per year* = Dissatisfied

Why are you dissatisfied with the number of weeks that your main childcare provider can offer you per year?

- My provider only allows me to use my hours during term-time
- The weeks offered don't match my working patterns
- My provider doesn't allow me to change the weeks I use
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

End of Block: Section 3 - Using Childcare

Start of Block: Section 4 - Fees and Charges

Display this question:

If *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Childminder

We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name – including how much you typically spend and what childcare providers charge you for.

Display this question:

If Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery or pre-school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name = Childminder

During a standard term-time week, in total, how much do you spend on Child's Name's formal childcare (in £)? Formal childcare includes nursery/pre-school, nursery class attached to school or a childminder.

To calculate your weekly average, for example, if you pay £500 a month, divide this figure by 4.3 and enter £116 (rounded to the nearest whole number).

_____

Display this question:

If *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Childminder

And *Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name* = Yes

Do you pay for additional hours on top of any funded childcare hours that you receive?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Display this question:

If *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Please select all of the childcare arrangements that you typically use for Child's Name* = Childminder

Do you pay any additional extra charges (excluding the cost of additional hours if you are receiving funded childcare)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Display this question:

If *Do you pay any additional extra charges (excluding the cost of additional hours if you are receiving funded childcare)?* = Yes

Which, if any of the following, are extra charges you usually pay for that are fixed? (Fixed extra charges are charges that a provider requires you to pay to take up a childcare place). Select all that apply

- Meals/drinks/snacks
- Other consumables (e.g. nappies or suncream)
- Extra regular activities such as music classes
- Extra one-off activities such as special outings
- Unarranged late pick-ups
- Lunch hour (time)
- General extras charge
- Use of equipment
- Travel costs
- Registration or other administration charges
- None of the above
- Other materials (please specify)

_____

Display this question:

If *Do you pay any additional extra charges (excluding the cost of additional hours if you are receiving funded hours?)* = Yes

Which, if any of the following, are extra charges you usually pay for that are optional? Please select all that apply

- Meals/drinks/snacks
- Other consumables (e.g. nappies or suncream)
- Extra regular activities such as music classes
- Extra one-off activities such as special outings
- Unarranged late pick-ups
- Lunch hour (time)
- General extras charge
- Use of equipment
- Travel costs
- Registration or other administration charges
- None of the above
- Other materials (please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If *Did Child's Name start in formal (paid for) childcare before you started claiming the entitlement?* = Yes

And *Fees & Charges We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name* is Displayed

And *Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name* = Yes

Since the introduction of the working families childcare entitlements from April 2024, how have your childcare costs changed for Child's Name?

- My childcare costs have increased
- My childcare costs have reduced
- My childcare costs have stayed the same

Display this question:

If *Fees & Charges We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name* Displayed

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The amount I pay for childcare per month is affordable for my family"

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Fees & Charges We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name* is Displayed

And *Do you pay any additional extra charges (excluding the cost of additional hours if you are receiving funding)?* = Yes

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The extra charges I pay for are reasonable"

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Fees & Charges We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name Displayed

The Government will be extending the entitlement to offer 30 hours funded childcare per week from September 2025 for children aged from 9 months for working families. When the childcare offer is available up to 30 hours, do you intend to change the number of hours of childcare for Child's Name?

- Yes, I intend to increase the number of hours my child spends in childcare in the future
- Yes, I intend to decrease the number of hours my child spends in childcare in the future
- No, I do not plan to change the number of hours my child spends in childcare
- I don't know whether I will change the number of hours my child spends in child-care.

Display this question:

If *The Government will be extending the entitlement to offer 30 hours funded childcare per week from*... = Yes, I intend to increase the number of hours my child spends in childcare in the future

And *Fees & Charges We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name* Displayed

You currently use ${CHILDCAREHRS/ChoiceTextEntryValue} hours of formal childcare per week during term-time. From September 2025, how many additional hours are you planning on adding per week, while you are working or have other regular commitments? Please enter only the number of extra hours you plan to add — not the new total

_____

Display this question:

If *The Government will be extending the entitlement to offer 30 hours funded childcare per week from...* = Yes, I intend to increase the number of hours my child spends in childcare in the future

And *Fees & Charges We'd like to understand your experiences of paying for childcare for Child's Name* Displayed

Or *The Government will be extending the entitlement to offer 30 hours funded childcare per week from...* = Yes, I intend to decrease the number of hours my child spends in childcare in the future

What are the main reasons you wish to change your childcare hours in the future?

- To increase my working hours
- To spend more time doing leisure activities
- To spend more time with my child/ren
- To reduce costs
- To manage other commitments e.g. housework or food shopping
- To support my child's development
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

End of Block: Section 4 - Fees and Charges

Start of Block: Section 5 - Employment

We want to understand how your employment situation may have changed since the arrival of Child's Name

What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be passed on to any other Government departments.

- Working full-time as an employee
- Working part-time as an employee
- Self-employed or freelance
- Temporarily away from work due to illness or temporarily laid off
- On maternity/paternity/parental/adoption leave
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including apprenticeship)
- Looking after home or family
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Unemployed and looking for work

Display this question:

If If *How many people over the age of 18 usually live at your current address? (including yourself)* Text Response Is Greater Than or Equal to 2

Do you live with a partner?

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If *Do you live with a partner?* = Yes

What best describes your partner's current employment status?

- Working full-time as an employee
- Working part-time as an employee
- Self-employed or freelance
- Temporarily away from work due to illness or temporarily laid off
- On maternity /paternity/parental/adoption leave
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including an apprenticeship)
- Looking after home or family
- Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Unemployed and looking for work

What is your total annual household income (before tax)? Please include any benefits which you may be claiming.

- Less than £10,000
- £10,000-19,999
- £20,000-29,999
- £30,000-39,999
- £40,000-49,999
- £50,000-59,999
- £60,000-69,999
- £70,000-79,999
- £80,000-89,999
- £90,000-99,999
- £100,000 or more

Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment status?[6]

- Working full-time as an employee
- Working part-time as an employee
- Self-employed or freelance
- Temporarily away from work due to illness or temporarily laid off
- On maternity/paternity/parental/adoption leave for another child (e.g. an older sibling)
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including an apprenticeship)
- Looking after home or family
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Unemployed and looking for work

Display this question:

If *Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name* = Yes

And *What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas...* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas...* = Working part-time as an employee

[6] In Wave 2, this question was phrased as: *Before the arrival of Child's Name what best described your employment status?*

Or *What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas...* = Self-employed or freelance

And If

Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name = Yes

Have your working hours changed since you started claiming working families entitlements for Child's Name?

o Yes - my working hours have increased

o Yes - my working hours have decreased

o No - my hours have stayed the same

o Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment st...* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment st...* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment st...* = Self-employed or freelance

And If

Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for ... = Yes

During term-time, how many hours per week did you work before you started claiming working families entitlements for Child's Name?

_____

Display this question:

If *What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas...* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas...* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas...* = Self-employed or freelance

During term-time, how many hours do you currently work per week?

_____

Display this question:

If Have your working hours changed since you started claiming working families entitlements for ... = Yes - my working hours have increased

Or Have your working hours changed since you started claiming working families entitlements for ... = Yes - my working hours have decreased

How influential was the introduction of working families childcare entitlements in changing your working hours?

- Very influential
- Somewhat influential
- Not very influential
- Not at all influential
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas... = Working full-time as an employee

Or What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas... = Working part-time as an employee

Or What best describes your current employment status? *Please note this information will not be pas... = Self-employed or freelance

What were the main reasons that facilitated your start/return to work? Please tick all that apply.

- Personal reasons (e.g. my own well-being)
- Family reasons (e.g. to accommodate my family's needs)
- The working families entitlement has enabled me to work
- Financial reasons (e.g. to cover essential expenses)
- For my career development
- My own job satisfaction
- None of the above
- Other [Please specify]
  _____

Display this question:

If *Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment st...* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment st...* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your employment st...* = Self-employed or freelance

Did you take maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave following the arrival of Child's Name?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Did you take maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave following the arrival of ... = Yes

How much leave did you take?

o Less than a month

o 1-6 months

o Over 6 months, but less than a year

o A year or more

Display this question:

If *Did you take maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave following the arrival of Child's Name* = Yes

Did the introduction of the working families childcare entitlement affect the amount of maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave you took?

- Yes - I took more time than I would have.
- Yes - I took less time than I would have.
- No, the childcare offer did not affect the amount of leave I took.
- Not applicable - my maternity leave ended before my child was eligible for the entitlement

Display this question:

If What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 17 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 16 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 15 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 14 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 13 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 12 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 11 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 10 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 9 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 8 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 7 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 6 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 5 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 4 years

Or What are the ages of the children living at your current address? = 3 years

Did you take maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave following the arrival of your older child/ren?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Did you take maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave following the arrival of your older child/ren? = Yes

How much leave did you take after the arrival of your older child/ren?

- Less than a month
- 1-6 months
- Over 6 months, but less than a year
- A year or more

Display this question:

If Do you live with a partner? = Yes

Before you started claiming working families entitlements, what best described your partner's employment status?

- Employed, full-time

- Employed, part-time
- Self-employed/freelance
- Temporarily away from work due to illness or temporarily laid off
- On maternity/paternity/adoption leave for another child (e.g. an older sibling)
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including an apprenticeship)
- Looking after home or family
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Unemployed and looking for work

Display this question:

If *What best describes your partner's current employment status?* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your partner's current employment status?* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your partner's current employment status?* = Self-employed or freelance

And If

Are you now accessing the 15 hours funded working families childcare entitlement for Child's Name = Yes

Have your partner's working hours changed since you started claiming working families entitlements for Child's Name?

- Yes, they increased the hours they work
- Yes, they decreased the hours they work
- No, the number of hours they work have stayed the same

Display this question:

If Have your partner's working hours changed since you started claiming working families entitlement... = Yes, they increased the hours they work

Or Have your partner's working hours changed since you started claiming working families entitlement... = Yes, they decreased the hours they work

How influential was the introduction of working families childcare entitlements in the changing your partner's working hours?

- Very influential
- Somewhat influential

- Not very influential
- Not at all influential
- Prefer not to say

End of Block: Section 5 - Employment

Start of Block: OPT IN - RECONTACT

We'd like to contact you again in around 6 months' time to allow us to measure any change in your experience and opinions from today. This is important for us to understand how to continue to support working parents. Do you consent to take part in the follow-up survey? If you complete the follow-up survey, you will receive a £10 voucher.

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If *We'd like to contact you again in around 6 months' time to allow us to measure any change in your...* = Yes

What is your full name?

Forename _____

Surname _____

Display this question:

If *We'd like to contact you again in around 6 months' time to allow us to measure any change in your...* = Yes

Please can you confirm the email address we can use to contact you? We will only use this information to contact you for the follow-up survey.

Email address _____

Please re-confirm your email address __

Display this question:

If *We'd like to contact you again in around 6 months' time to allow us to measure any change in your...* = Yes

Please can you confirm the mobile telephone number we can use to contact you? We will ONLY use this information to contact you by text for the follow-up survey.

Mobile number _____

Please re-confirm your mobile number

_____

End of Block: OPT IN - RECONTACT

Childcare Experiences Survey - Wave 3 follow-up questionnaire[7]

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Welcome to the Department for Education's Childcare Experiences Follow-Up Survey. Between June and August 2025, the Department for Education (DfE) invited you to take part in a survey of parents who had applied to the working families childcare entitlement. You took part in the survey and consented to take part in a follow-up survey in approximately 6 months time. In this follow-up survey, we want to know how your experiences have changed over the past six months.

Participation is voluntary. You will receive a £10 e-voucher for your time completing both the first survey and this survey. The vouchers will be issued by EdenRed and sent to all participants by the 2nd of April 2026 - within 10 working days after the close of the survey at 11:59pm on the 19th of March 2026.

Your responses will help us understand how parents experience accessing childcare and government childcare entitlements. Findings will inform how we deliver future government childcare policies in England to meet the needs of families like yours. All information you give us will be treated as confidential and reported anonymously. No one will be able to identify you from our reports. Reports and statistical information will be published on GOV.UK.

If you would like a link to the final report when it is available, please email the team inbox at Your.CHILDCARE@Education.gov.uk.

How we collect and use your data: You can view our privacy notice here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/privacy-information-parents-carers-and-legal-guardians . We will collect, store and process your data in line with Section 7 - Using your data to gather evidence for policy development and delivery. Our standard privacy notice states that sometimes we link your survey responses to other government-held data. We will not link your responses to any of the childcare experiences surveys to any government-held data.

Our standard privacy notice states that we collect and use the following personal information from you or your education provider, including your full name, address, email address, phone number and date of birth. For this Childcare Experiences Survey, we will not collect and use any information from your education provider. We will not collect and use information about your phone number and date of birth.

To navigate the survey, please use the ‘Next’ and 'Back' buttons. Do not worry if you accidentally close the survey as your responses are automatically saved. You can return to the survey at any time by following the survey link. If you have any questions about the

[7] Wave 2 follow-up questionnaire contained the same questions but with the reference date used in the questions as 1st of May 2025 instead of 1st of September 2025 as in this questionnaire.

research, or issues completing the survey please contact Your.CHILDCARE@Education.gov.uk. If you are concerned about the research or are unhappy with the response from the inbox, please contact Chloe Tabor (chloe1.tabor@education.gov.uk).

SCRNELIGIBLE Are you still responsible for arranging childcare for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}[8]?

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If Are you still responsible for arranging childcare for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? = No

SCRNOUT Thank you for your time. Unfortunately, you are out of scope for this study.

Skip To: End of Survey If Thank you for your time. Unfortunately, you are out of scope for this study. Displayed

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Household Characteristics We will start by asking you about your household and how your circumstances might have changed since completing our previous survey – including basic information about yourself and those you live with, including children.

POSTCODE Can you confirm the first half of your postcode? For example, if your postcode is SW1P 3BT, enter SW1P. This will be used to identify your English region for our analysis.

_____

PARTNERFLAG Do you live with a partner?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

CHILDREN In the previous survey, you said that the number of people under the age of 18 currently living in your household is ${e://Field/CHILDREN}[9]. Is this still correct?

- Yes

[8] Data embedded from the mainstage survey.
[9] Data embedded from the mainstage survey.

- No

Display this question:

If *In the previous survey, you said that the number of people under the age of 18 currently living i...* = No

CHILDRENCHANGE How many children under the age of 18 currently live in your household?

_____

Display this question:

If *In the previous survey, you said that the number of people under the age of 18 currently living i...* = No

CHILDRENCHANGE1 Were any of these children born since 1st September 2025?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Were any of these children born since 1st September 2025? = Yes

MATERNITYFLAG Are you currently on maternity/paternity/parental or adoption leave?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

ENTCHANGE How old is ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?

Drop-down list: 1 year / 2 years / 3 years/ 4 years

ANYCHSEND Since 1st September 2025, have any children in your household been newly identified as having Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Since 1st September 2025, have any children in your household been newly identified as having Spe... = Yes

And If

SENDSTATUS[10] Contains No

ENTCHSEND1 Was ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} identified as having Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Since 1st September 2025, have any children in your household been newly identified as having Spe... = Yes

CHSENDWORK To what extent, if any, does caring for this/these child/ren with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities affect your ability to work?

- A great deal
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all
- Prefer not to say

End of Block: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

[10] Data embedded from the mainstage survey.

Start of Block: APPLYING FOR AND FINDING CHILDCARE

We want to understand how your experiences with applying for and claiming childcare support that the government offers for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}. You can find out more about the childcare support available to you at https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/.

CLAIMFLAG Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Please select all that apply)

- 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families from the term after your child turns 9 months old until the term they turn 3).
- 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families for children aged 3 to 4 years).
- 15 hours funded childcare (for all families for children aged 3 to 4 years).
- 15 hours early learning for 2-year-olds of families receiving additional forms of support.
- Universal Credit Childcare
- Tax-Free Childcare
- I don’t know
- None of the above

Display this question:

If *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please se... != 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families from the term after your child turns 9 months old until the term they turn 3).

And *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please se... != 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families for children aged 3 to 4 years).

And *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please se... != 15 hours funded childcare (for all families for children aged 3 to 4 years).

And *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please se... != 15 hours early learning for 2-year-olds of families receiving additional forms of support.

CLAIMFLAGRSN Which of the following are reasons why you are not using funded childcare hours for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Please select all that apply)

- I couldn’t find a provider that had available places
- I couldn’t find a provider that fit our family’s working patterns
- I couldn’t find a provider that can provide for my child’s special educational needs and/or disabilities
- I couldn’t find a provider that can provide high quality care for my child
- It does not make childcare more affordable for me

- My chosen provider is not eligible for the funded hours (e.g. nannies, babysitters)
- My child is on a waiting list for a funded place
- I am not eligible for any funded hours
- I had difficulties with claiming my code

Display this choice:

If *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please se... = Universal Credit Childcare

Or *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please se... = Tax-Free Childcare

- I didn't know I could use funded hours with Universal Credit Childcare and/or Tax-Free Childcare
- I don't want to use paid childcare for my child
- None of the above

Display this question:

If *Which of the following are reasons why you are not using funded childcare hours for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* (Please select all that apply) and q://QID23/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than or Equal to 2

CLAIMFLAGRSN1 What is your main barrier to not using funded childcare hours?

- I couldn't find a provider that had available places
- I couldn't find a provider that fit our family's working patterns
- I couldn't find a provider that can provide for my child's special educational needs and/or disabilities
- I couldn't find a provider that can provide high quality care for my child
- It does not make childcare more affordable for me
- My chosen provider is not eligible for the funded hours (e.g. nannies, babysitters)
- My child is on a waiting list for a funded place
- I am not eligible for any funded hours
- I had difficulties with claiming my code
- I didn't know I could use funded hours with Universal Credit Childcare and/or Tax-Free Childcare

Display this question:

If *Which of the following are reasons why you are not using funded childcare hours for ...* = I am not eligible for any funded hours

CLAIMELIGIBILITY Why are you not eligible for the funded hours?

- I am not in employment and/or my partner is not in employment
- My and/or my partner’s income is too low
- My and/or my partner’s income is too high
- Other (please specify)
  _____

CHILDCARECHANGE Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025?

Childcare arrangements are when someone else looks after your child instead of you. Some examples of changing childcare arrangements include, but are not limited to: Starting at a new nursery, preschool or with a new childminder , taking your child out of nursery to care for them at home, hiring someone new, like a nanny, au pair or babysitter

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025 = Yes

CHILDCARECHANGETYPE Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)

- Nursery or pre-school
- Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school
- Childminder
- Nanny or au pair
- Babysitter
- The child's grandparent(s)
- The child's older brother/sister
- Another relative
- A friend or neighbour
- None of the above

Display this question:

If *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = Yes

CHILDCARECHANGEWHY Why have you changed your childcare arrangements since 1st September 2025?

- I moved to a provider more convenient for me and my family
- A space became available at my preferred provider
- The cost of my previous provider became too high
- My child's developmental needs have changed
- I was not satisfied with the quality of care provided

- My previous childcare provider closed
- I needed more childcare hours than my arrangements offered
- I needed less childcare hours than my arrangements offered
- I no longer wanted to use nurseries, pre-schools and childminders
- Other (please specify)
  _____
- I have not changed my childcare arrangements

Display this question:

If Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 20... = Yes

And FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) != Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) != Childminder

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) != Nursery or pre-school

Or If

FORMALCHILDCARE Contains No

And Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 20... = No

Or If

FORMALCHILDCARE Contains No

And Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 20... = Yes

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) != Nursery or pre-school

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) != Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) != Childminder

NOFORMALWHY Why are you not using nurseries, pre-school or childminders for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Display this question:

If Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Nursery or pre-school

Or Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Childminder

And If

FORMALCHILDCARE Contains No

APPCHALLENGES When finding a childcare place for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}, which of these challenges, if any, have you experienced since 1st September 2025?

- Accessing government guidance for childcare offers
- Understanding guidance for childcare offers
- Finding suitable childcare for my child which met my preferences
- Securing a place at my preferred provider (for example, I was put on a waiting list)
- Finding childcare that was affordable for me
- The childcare provider had difficulty validating the code given to me
- Finding childcare that was a suitable distance away
- I did not encounter any challenges
- Other (Please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025 = No

Or If

Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Nursery or pre-school

Or Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Childminder

CHILDCAREHOURS

During a standard term-time week, in total, how many hours does ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} currently spend in nursery, pre-school and/or childminders?

Please include both government funded and hours you may pay for. For example, if you claim 30 funded hours and pay for 5 additional hours, enter 35.

_____

Display this question:

If FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025 = No

Or If

Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 20... = Yes

And FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Nursery or pre-school

Or If

Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025 = Yes

And FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or If

Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025 = Yes

And FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply) = Childminder

CHILDCAREHRSCHANGE During a standard term-time week, have the number of hours ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} spends in nursery, pre-school and/or childminders changed since 1st September 2025?

- Yes – their hours have increased
- Yes - their hours have decreased
- No - their hours have stayed the same
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If During a standard term-time week, have the number of hours ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} spends in nursery, pre-school and/or childminders changed since 1st September 2025?= Yes – their hours have increased

CHILDHRSCHANGEINCWHY Why have you increased your number of childcare hours? (please select all that apply)

- I have increased my working hours.
- My provider offered me additional hours I wanted that were not available previously.
- I wanted my child to spend more time at their provider for their education/development needs.
- I needed more time to manage other responsibilities (e.g. household errands or other caring duties).
- There was a decrease in hours my other childcare arrangements (e.g. grandparents and family friends) can provide.
- I am now able to afford more hours.
- Other (Please Specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If During a standard term-time week, have the number of hours ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} spends in nursery, pre-school and/or childminders changed since 1st September 2025? = Yes - their hours have decreased

CHILDHRSDECWHY Why have you decreased your number of childcare hours? (please select all that apply)

- I've reduced my working hours
- I'm on maternity/paternity/parental leave
- There was an increase in hours my other childcare arrangements (e.g. grand-parents and family friends) can provide
- I want to spend more time with my child
- Longer hours do not suit my child's needs
- I can no longer afford the number of hours I was using
- Other (please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If *During a standard term-time week, have the number of hours ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} spends in nursery, pre-school and/or childminders changed since 1st September 2025?* = Yes – their hours have increased

Or *During a standard term-time week, have the number of hours ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} spends in nursery, pre-school and/or childminders changed since 1st September 2025?* = Yes - their hours have decreased

CHILDCAREHRCHANGEENT How influential were the funded hours in changing your childcare hours?

- Very influential
- Somewhat influential
- Not very influential
- Not at all influential
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* = 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families from the term after your child turns 9 months old until the term they turn 3).

Or *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* = 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families for children aged 3 to 4 years).

Or *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* = 15 hours funded childcare (for all families for children aged 3 to 4 years).

Or *Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* = 15 hours early learning for 2-year-olds of families receiving additional forms of support.

ENTHRSREST Since 1st September 2025, has your main childcare provider placed any of the following restrictions on when you can use your funded hours?

- I can only use the hours for full days
- I can only use the hours before and/or after a certain time of day
- I can only use the hours on certain days of the week
- I can only use the entitlements if my child is in the childcare provider for more than 15 hours per week
- I can only use a certain number of hours per day (e.g. only 6 hours per day)
- Other (Please specify)
  _____
- My provider hasn't placed any new restrictions

End of Block: APPLYING FOR AND FINDING CHILDCARE

Start of Block: FEES AND CHARGES

Display this question:

If *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = Yes

And *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Childminder

Or *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Nursery or pre-school

Or If

FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = No

We'd like to understand how your experiences of paying for childcare for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} have changed over the last 6 months – including how much you typically spend and what childcare providers charge you for.

Skip To: AFFORDABILITY If Fees and charges We'd like to understand how your experiences of paying for childcare for ... Not Displayed

Display this question:

If *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = Yes

And *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Childminder

Or If

FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = No

MONTHLYCOST In total, how much do you currently typically spend per month on ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}'s childcare at nursery, pre-school and/or childminders? (in £)

_____

Skip To: End of Block If Condition: In total, how much do you c... Is Not Displayed. Skip To: End of Block.

Display this question:

If Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? = 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families from the term after your child turns 9 months old until the term they turn 3).

Or Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? = 30 hours funded childcare (for eligible working families for children aged 3 to 4 years).

Or Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? = 15 hours funded childcare (for all families for children aged 3 to 4 years).

Or Which government childcare support are you currently using for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? = 15 hours early learning for 2-year-olds of families receiving additional forms of support.

ADDITIONALHRS Do you pay for additional hours on top of your funded childcare hours?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Display this question:

If *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = Yes

And *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Nursery or pre-school

Or *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school

Or *Which childcare arrangements do you now use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}? (Select all that apply)* = Childminder

Or If

FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And *Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025* = No

ADDITIONALCHARGES Do you pay any additional charges (such as nappies, meals and snacks)? This does not include charges for additional childcare hours.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Display this question:

If *Do you pay any additional charges (such as nappies, meals and snacks)?* = Yes

FIXEDEXTRA Which, if any, of the following are extra charges you usually pay for that are fixed? (Fixed extra charges are charges that a provider requires you to pay to take up a childcare place). (Please select all that apply)

- Meals/drinks/snacks
- Other consumables (e.g. nappies or suncream)
- Extra regular activities such as music classes
- Extra one-off activities such as special outings
- Unarranged late pick-ups
- Lunch hour (time)
- General extras charge
- Use of equipment
- Travel costs
- Registration or other administration charges
- None of the above

- Other materials (please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If *Do you pay any additional charges (such as nappies, meals and snacks*)? = Yes

OPTIONALEXTRA Which, if any of the following, are extra charges you usually pay for that are optional? (Please select all that apply)

- Meals/drinks/snacks
- Other consumables (e.g. nappies or suncream)
- Extra regular activities such as music classes
- Extra one-off activities such as special outings
- Unarranged late pick-ups
- Lunch hour (time)
- General extras charge
- Use of equipment
- Travel costs
- Registration or other administration charges
- None of the above
- Other materials (please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If FORMALCHILDCARE Contains Yes

And Have the childcare arrangements you use for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} changed since 1st September 2025? = No

COSTCHANGE During a standard term-time week, has the amount you spend on ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}'s childcare at nursery, pre-school and/or childminders changed since 1st September 2025?

- Yes – my costs have increased
- Yes – my costs have decreased
- No – my cost has stayed the same
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *During a standard term-time week, has the amount you spend on ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}'s childcare...* = Yes – my costs have increased

COSTCHANGEWHYINC Why has the amount you spend increased? (please select all that apply)

- My provider has increased their fees
- I am using more hours of childcare
- I switched to a more expensive provider
- I am now paying for more additional charges (e.g. nappies, meals and snacks)
- I no longer use funded hours
- Other (Please Specify)

_____

Display this question:

If During a standard term-time week, has the amount you spend on ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}'s childcare... = Yes – my costs have decreased

COSTCHANGEWHYDEC Why has the amount you spend decreased? (please select all that apply)

▢ My provider has decreased their fees

▢ I am using less hours of childcare

▢ I switched to a more affordable provider

▢ I am now paying for less additional charges (e.g. nappies, meals and snacks)

▢ I started using funded hours

▢ Other (Please Specify)

_____

Display this question:

If *Do you pay any additional charges (such as nappies, meals and snacks)?* = Yes

AFFORDABILITY2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The extra charges I pay for are reasonable"

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Prefer not to say

AFFORDABILITY To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The amount I pay for childcare per month is affordable for my family"

- Strongly agree

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Prefer not to say

End of Block: FEES AND CHARGES

Start of Block: EMPLOYMENT

We want to understand how your employment situation may have changed in the last six months.

Display this question:

If *Are you currently on maternity/paternity/parental or adoption leave?* != Yes

PREVEMPLOYMENT In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}[11]. Is this your current employment status?

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If *Are you currently on maternity/paternity/parental or adoption leave?* != Yes

And If

In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}. Is this your current employment status? != Yes

EMPLOYMENT What best describes your current employment status? Please note this information will not be passed on to any other Government departments.

- Working full-time as an employee
- Working part-time as an employee
- Self-employed or freelance
- Temporarily away from work due to illness or temporarily laid off
- On maternity/paternity/parental/adoption leave
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including apprenticeship)
- Looking after home or family
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Unemployed and looking for work

HOUSEHOLDINCOME What is your total annual household income (before tax)? Please include any benefits which you may be claiming.

- Less than £10,000
- £10,000-19,999
- £20,000-29,999
- £30,000-39,999
- £40,000-49,999

[11] Data embedded from the mainstage survey.

- £50,000-59,999
- £60,000-69,999
- £70,000-79,999
- £80,000-89,999
- £90,000-99,999
- £100,000 or more

Display this question:

If *Are you currently on maternity/paternity/parental or adoption leave?* = Yes

Or If

What best describes your current employment status? = On maternity/paternity/parental/adoption leave

RETURNFROMMATERNITY After your maternity/paternity/parental or adoption leave ends, what do you expect to be doing?

- Working full-time as an employee
- Working part-time as an employee
- Self-employed or freelance
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including apprenticeship)
- Looking after my children full-time at home
- Caring for family members (not including your own children)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If *What best describes your current employment status?* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status?* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status?* = Self-employed or freelance

Or If

In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}. = Yes

And WORK Contains Working

Or If

In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}. = Yes

And WORK Contains Self-employed

CURRENTEMPLOYMENTHRS How many hours do you currently work in a typical week?

_____

Display this question:

If *What best describes your current employment status? Please note this information will not be pass...* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status? Please note this information will not be pass...* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your current employment status? Please note this information will not be pass...* = Self-employed or freelance

Or If

In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}. Is this your... = Yes

And WORK Contains Working

Or If

In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}. Is this your... = Yes

And WORK Contains Self-employed

WKHRSCHANGE Since 1st September 2025, has the number of hours you currently work in a typical week changed?

- Yes - my working hours have increased
- Yes - my working hours have decreased
- No - my hours have stayed the same
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If Since 1st September 2025, has the number of hours you currently work in a typical week changed? = Yes - my working hours have increased

WKHRSCHINC What are the reasons your work hours have increased? (Select all that apply)

- I can now afford more childcare
- I've taken on more hours or a new job
- I've returned to work after parental leave
- I've had a change in personal circumstances (e.g. financial need, career goals)
- I've gained access to more childcare hours at my provider
- Other [Please specify]
  _____
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Since 1st September 2025, has the number of hours you currently work in a typical week changed?* = Yes - my working hours have decreased

WKHRSCHDEC What are the reasons your work hours have decreased? (Select all that apply)

- I don't need to work as much to afford childcare
- I need to cover childcare as I couldn't get the childcare hours I wanted at my provider.
- I've taken parental leave (e.g. maternity/paternity leave)
- I've changed jobs or roles with fewer hours
- I've chosen to spend more time with my child
- I've had a change in personal circumstances (e.g. health, caring responsibilities)
- Other [Please specify]
  _____
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Do you live with a partner?* = Yes

PEMPLOYMENT What best describes your partner's current employment status? Please note this information will not be passed on to any other Government departments.

- Working full-time as an employee
- Working part-time as an employee
- Self-employed or freelance
- Temporarily away from work due to illness or temporarily laid off

- On maternity/paternity/parental/adoption leave
- Full-time/part-time education or training (including apprenticeship)
- Looking after home or family
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Unemployed and looking for work

Display this question:

If *What best describes your partner's current employment status? Please note this information will n...* = Working full-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your partner's current employment status? Please note this information will n...* = Working part-time as an employee

Or *What best describes your partner's current employment status? Please note this information will n...* = Self-employed or freelance

PEMPLOYMENTWKHRS Since 1st September 2025, have the number of hours per week that your partner currently works changed?

- Yes – their working hours have increased
- Yes - their working hours have decreased
- No - their hours have stayed the same
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Since 1st September 2025, have the number of hours per week that your partner currently works cha...* = Yes – their working hours have increased

PARTNERWORKHRSINC What are the reasons your partner's work hours have increased? (Select all that apply)

- We can now afford more childcare
- They have taken on more hours or a new job
- They have returned to work after parental leave
- They have had a change in personal circumstances (e.g. financial need, career goals)
- We have gained access to more childcare hours at our provider
- Other [Please specify]
  _____
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *Since 1st September 2025, have the number of hours per week that your partner currently works cha...* = Yes - their working hours have decreased

PARTNERWORKHRSDEC What are the reasons your partner's work hours have decreased? (Select all that apply)

- They don’t need to work as much to afford childcare
- They need to cover childcare as we couldn’t get the childcare hours we wanted at our provider
- They have taken parental leave (e.g. maternity/paternity leave)
- They have changed jobs or roles with fewer hours
- They have chosen to spend more time with our child
- They had a change in personal circumstances (e.g. health, caring responsibilities)
- Other [Please specify]
  _____
- Prefer not to say

End of Block: EMPLOYMENT

Start of Block: FUTUREPLANS

We'd like to understand your intentions around childcare and employment when ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} starts school.

FUTUREHRS Will you require additional childcare hours outside of school hours for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Display this question:

If *Will you require additional childcare hours outside of school hours for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* = Yes

FUTUREHRSYES When ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} is in school, when do you plan to use additional childcare arrangements? (Please select all that apply).

- Before school
- After school
- During school holidays
- Weekends
- Other (Please Specify)
  _____

Display this question:

If *Will you require additional childcare hours outside of school hours for ${e://Field/CHILDNAME}?* = Yes

FUTUREPROVIDER When ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} starts school, which childcare arrangements will you typically use outside of school hours? (Please select all that apply)

- Breakfast club
- After school club
- Holiday club/scheme
- Childminder
- Nanny or au pair
- Babysitter
- The child's grandparent(s)
- The child's older sibling(s)

- Another relative
- A friend or neighbour

Display this question:

If *What best describes your current employment status? Please note this information will not be pass... !*= Long-term sick or disabled

And *What best describes your current employment status? Please note this information will not be pass...* != Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)

Or If

In the previous survey, you said that your employment status was ${e://Field/WORK}. Is this your... = Yes

And WORK Does Not Contain Long-term sick

WKHRSINTENTIONS When ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} starts school, do you intend to change your working hours?

- Yes - my working hours may increase
- Yes - my working hours may decrease
- No - my hours may stay the same
- I intend to look for/start work
- I am not intending on working
- Prefer not to say

Display this question:

If *When ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} starts school, do you intend to change your working hours?* = Yes - my working hours may increase

WKHRSINTRSNINCR Why do you intend to increase your working hours?

_____

Display this question:

If *When ${e://Field/CHILDNAME} starts school, do you intend to change your working hours?* = Yes - my working hours may decrease

WKHRSINTRSNDEC Why do you intend to decrease your working hours?

_____

End of Block: FUTUREPLANS

Start of Block: OPT IN - FUTURE RESEARCH

CONSENT OPT IN Would you be willing for Department for Education to invite you to take part in further Early Years research opportunities? Participation is always optional. Your name and email address will be held by DfE for one year before being securely destroyed.

- Yes
- No

Display this question:

If *Would you be willing for Department for Education to invite you to take part in further Early Yea...* = Yes

NAME What is your full name?

Forename _____

Surname _____

Display this question:

If *Would you be willing for Department for Education to invite you to take part in further Early Yea...* = Yes

EMAIL ADDRESS Please can you confirm the email address we can use to contact you? We will only use this information to contact you for any future research opportunities.

Email address _____

Please re-confirm your email address

_____

End of Block: OPT IN - FUTURE RESEARCH

Department for Education

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