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Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot programmes:
Final report on qualitative research into implementation.

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SureStart

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Report 027

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Acknowledgements

Glossary of Abbreviations

BA   Benefits Agency

CIS   Children's Information Service

CPM   Childcare Partnership Manager

CTP   Childcare Taster Pilot

DCSF   Department for Children, Schools and Families

DWP   Department for Work and Pensions

EZ   Employment Zones

ESCP   Extended Schools Childcare Pilot

IS   Income Support. Income Support is a non-contributory, income-assessed benefit available to people who are not required to work.

Jobcentre Plus 56 Jobcentre Plus pathfinder offices, offering fully integrated work and benefit services, and a further 200 fully integrated Jobcentre Plus offices, were opened between October 2002 and April 2006. References to Jobcentre Plus within this report should be taken to also refer to the Employment Service and Benefits Agency local offices, as this research was conducted during a time of changeover.

JSA   Jobseeker's Allowance

LA   Local Authority

LP-WFI   Lone Parent Work Focused Interview

NDLP   New Deal for Lone Parents

NDP   New Deal for Partners

WFI   Work Focused Interview

1   Executive Summary

1.1   Background and Aims

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the Extended Schools Childcare and Childcare Taster Pilots which ran from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2006 in eleven local authorities in England. Other Pilots ran in Scotland and Wales.

The Pilots explored the assertion that a lack of affordable and accessible childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support. Affordable childcare was provided for lone parents to enable them to enter employment, allowing an evaluation of whether the childcare barrier is real or perceived and whether, if it is removed, other barriers come to the fore as being major obstacles preventing lone parents from working. Lone parents were the main target group for the Pilots, but partners of benefit recipients who had childcare responsibilities were also a key client group.

The evaluation took place in six phases from June 2004 to June 2006, with phases timed to allow examination of stakeholders' views at key stages of the Pilots. Phase six of the evaluation explored parents' views, including both parents who had participated in the Pilots and those who had been offered participation but had declined it.

A total of 256 interviews with stakeholders were undertaken across five phases, including revisiting participants up to three times. The research included staff from local authorities, Job Centre Plus, Children's Information Services, schools and childcare providers.

Ninety six interviews were carried out with parents. Sixty interviews were undertaken across the Pilot areas with parents who had participated in one or more elements of the Pilots. Thirty six interviews were undertaken with parents who had been offered participation but had declined it.

There were two aspects to the Pilots: Extended Schools Childcare Pilots (ESCP) and Childcare Taster Pilots (CTP)[1].

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[1] It should be noted that whilst the Pilots had been intended to include the partners of people on certain benefits, very few partners were approached by Jobcentre staff. There were two main reasons for this: New Deal for Partners had not been fully

ESCP aimed to develop a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible childcare within the Pilot areas to meet the needs of lone parents, with the objective of developing and managing existing childcare places and creating additional places in or through schools where necessary. ESCP stakeholders worked with schools and other childcare providers to fulfil these aims and objectives. As will be noted later, in some areas ESCP stakeholders also worked outside of the main remit of the Pilots by developing outreach work with parents.

CTP was designed to help parents to overcome concerns they had about formal childcare and to allow them, and their children, to sample different types of childcare to judge which would best suit their needs. There were three elements to CTP:

- Childcare Chats, undertaken by Childcare Advisors. These lasted approximately an hour and examined the childcare needs of parents, and gave information about the childcare available in their area.

- Visits to childcare providers. Childcare Advisors set up visits for parents to go to childcare providers to see for themselves how the childcare was run; in some areas the Childcare Advisors had the capacity to accompany the parents. It was envisaged that parents might visit several childcare providers in this way, to compare different types of provision.

- Childcare Tasters. Parents could have up to ten half day sessions (effectively, one week of childcare) free, to try out childcare provision. Again, it was envisaged that parents could try out more than one childcare provider using this scheme.

1.2   Findings

1.2.1   Stakeholders' perspectives

Stakeholders generally had a good understanding of the aims of the Pilots. Each area developed the Pilots to meet the needs of the parents within their locality.

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implemented in all Jobcentres; and there were some stakeholders who felt that the emphasis of the Pilots needed to be on lone parents, as they were seen as being most in need of the help available through the Pilots.

Some areas experienced difficulties in setting up the Pilots, including:

- The timescales of the Pilots – which caused problems in recruiting staff, and, for ESCP, fitting in with the school year.

- Stakeholders said they would have liked more guidance on setting up and running the Pilots, particularly in the early stages. Guidance was felt to be needed, for instance, regarding the goals of the Pilots and definitions of how success would be judged. More information would also have been welcomed on the monitoring systems required by the DCSF and DWP, as some areas had set up their own monitoring, and later had to change to the system put in place centrally.

Stakeholders overcame some of the difficulties they experienced, but others, such as the timescale of the Pilots were more problematic. One area which had received ESCP funding had not been able to recruit anyone to run the scheme in time to set it up, so it did not run at all in that locality.

In some areas the Pilots had not run as originally planned, for example:

- There were areas with ESCP funding that elected to use some of their money for outreach work, to enable closer working with parents, aimed at helping them overcome barriers other than childcare.

- Although the Pilots were intended to include partners of benefit recipients who had childcare responsibilities, in the main the stakeholders targeted lone parents. In some areas this was because New Deal for Partners was not fully operational and in others stakeholders had decided that lone parents were a better target group.

There were two elements of the Pilots which stakeholders felt had worked particularly well. Firstly, Childcare chats were thought to have benefited parents by giving them information about childcare in their area and addressing questions and queries about formal childcare. The Childcare chats were thought to be the easiest element of the Pilots to take forward in stakeholders' work when the Pilots ceased, and many were planning to offer something similar. The second element particularly praised by stakeholders was the interagency working generated by the Pilots. The contacts made between stakeholders in different organisations was seen to be beneficial, and again something that would continue to be of benefit after the Pilots ended.

1.2.2 Participating parents' experiences[2]

Generally, parents were positive about their experiences of the Pilots and overall participation in the Pilots appears to have had a beneficial effect on parents' views of formal childcare. There were mixed effects on parents' attitudes to returning to work as a result of the Pilots. Some parents had already taken the decision to return to work prior to being offered the Pilots, and used them to test out childcare or get a week's free childcare in their first week of work. Other parents were encouraged by their experience of the Pilots to begin thinking about returning to work. There were other parents, however, for whom the experience of the Pilots had caused them to realise that returning to work might not be viable:

- Those who needed childcare during atypical hours.

- Those who realised that they would have to work more hours than they wanted, to make working financially viable for them.

1.2.3 Non-participating parents' views

Generally, there was no antipathy to the idea of working amongst non-participating parents. Parents of younger children were likely to say that they wished to wait until their child was at school before returning to work.

It was usual for non-participating parents to have experience of childcare in the past, with some parents having had negative experiences, for example: inflexibility over timings of childcare, and payment for it; the time needed to travel to and from childcare provision; some children did not enjoy being left in childcare; and the high costs and unavailability of childcare.

Some parents expressed a preference for informal childcare, usually with family or friends.

Two major reasons were given for declining participation in the Pilots:

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[2] Interviews with parents all took place after the Pilots had finished. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, for participating parents, we wished to ensure that they had completed their participation in the Pilots, and interviewing during the course of the Pilots could have meant that people went on to experience other elements after being interviewed. Secondly, in terms of non-participating parents, it was important to capture people who had truly not participated, rather than having deferred participation.

- Not being work ready, for example, not having worked for a long time, or lacking qualifications.

- Already having childcare in place, so not needing help from the Pilots.

There were parents who did not participate who would have taken part if more information had been available to them. For some of these parents there was an initial interest raised when the Pilots were first mentioned to them, and they had thought that they would be sent more information in the fullness of time, however, when it had not been forthcoming they did not have enough interest to chase it up themselves.

1.2.4   Barriers to using formal childcare

Seven potential barriers to using formal childcare were identified by both participating and non-participating parents. The barriers applied across all age groups, and in relation to both CTP and ESCP.

- The cost of formal childcare. There were two elements to this barrier – the deposit required by childcare providers, and the ongoing costs on a weekly basis. Both participating and non-participating parents felt that the expense of formal childcare was a major barrier to using it, even with the help they could get through benefits.

- Lack of information about childcare in local areas. There were parents who did not know how to find out about childcare, and for these parents the Pilots had been extremely advantageous, with the information given by the Childcare Advisors being particularly helpful.

- Lack of availability of childcare. There were four main issues cited here:

   o There were areas where there were a general lack of childcare places, and/or parents had found difficulty securing a place for their child. In some areas where parents had participated in the Pilots, and been interested in taking up childcare, they had been disappointed to find out that they could not get a place for their child with the providers they had visited, or tried out in the Tasters.

   o Proximity of childcare to home or work. Some parents could only find childcare which was too far from their home or work, meaning it would not be viable for them, because time was added to their daily routine in taking

the children and picking them up, and cost could be involved too, as extra journeys would have to be made.

- o Childcare not being available at the right time. This was particularly a problem for parents who worked outside of 'normal' working hours, for example those who might need to work nightshifts or weekends. Not only was this type of childcare provision rare, but it was also expensive.

- o Lack of childcare for children with special needs. Parents of children with special needs had difficulties finding suitable childcare for their children. Stakeholders reported that this was a consistent problem, and that even when places did become available they might be at quite some distance from the family's home.

- Worries about security and safety in childcare settings. Both participating and non-participating parents expressed some concerns about this. Some worries came from media stories about childcare where children were not adequately looked after. Parents who participated in the Pilots felt reassured by visiting and trying out childcare.

- Worries about children not settling in formal childcare. There were parents who felt that their children would not be happy in formal childcare, and would not, therefore, settle. Generally, when children were left in childcare for the Tasters they enjoyed the sessions, and parents changed their views about this.

- Worries about the quality of formal childcare. Again, this was a worry for both participating and non-participating parents. Usually the worries were about how children would be occupied during their stay in childcare, and again, these tended to be sparked by stories in the media. Parents who participated in the Pilots generally had their fears allayed.

- Wanting to stay at home with children. Amongst both participating and non-participating parents there were those, particularly parents of children under school age, who wished to remain at home with their children, at least until they were a little older.

For some parents not being work ready appeared to be a more major barrier to returning to work than childcare, however for other parents the barriers to using formal childcare, outlined above, were raised as major issues, particularly the cost of childcare.

1.3 Conclusions

1.3.1 Meeting the aims and objectives of the Pilots

The Pilots met their aims and objectives with varying degrees of success.

1.3.1.1 Extended Schools Childcare Pilots

ESCP aimed to provide enough affordable formal childcare for lone parents with school aged children, particularly those on Income Support, to enable them to enter employment. Stakeholders investigated the supply of childcare in their areas at the outset of the Pilots, and some found that vacancies existed. Childcare available from the ESCP elements of the Pilots was well liked by parents, who felt it was more affordable and convenient than other types of formal childcare. However, there were some parents who still found the cost of childcare provided through ESCP prohibitive, and this limitation somewhat hindered the success of the Pilots.

1.3.1.2 Childcare Taster Pilots

CTP had four broad aims:

- To raise parents' awareness of the quality of formal childcare

  CTP was largely successful in this respect, with parents' worries about formal childcare usually being ameliorated as a result of their participation.

- Addressing parents' concerns

  It appears that there was some success in addressing parents' concerns, for those parents who had them. For parents who were ready to work the Tasters gave useful assistance in facilitating the move into work, for example by providing a week's free childcare to help them prepare for work or go for interviews.

- Helping parents to make choices about childcare

  Childcare Chats were successful in identifying issues of importance for parents, and identifying the types of childcare in their area. Accompanied Visits and Tasters helped parents to identify childcare they might be willing to use. The evidence suggests that this aim was met with parents who were not already clear about the sort of childcare provision they would prefer.

- Helping parents feel more comfortable about using formal childcare

  For those parents who had worries about formal childcare the chance to try out provision in Tasters helped to alleviate many of their concerns. CTP was particularly successful for parents who had worried about whether their child would setting into formal childcare, or who had had concerns about how their children would be occupied during the day.

1.3.1.3 Overall aim of the Pilots

The overall aim of the Pilots was to explore the assertion that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support. Whilst the evaluations suggests that there can be little doubt that childcare is a barrier to work for such parents, that it is only one aspect, and that other barriers (both childcare and non-childcare related) which are potentially of equal or prime importance.

The cost of childcare was the greatest childcare related barrier remaining for parents, others being lack of childcare close to home or work, and lack of childcare for parents who worked outside of 'normal' hours.

Other barriers for parents related to not being work ready, either because they lacked confidence or because they needed training. There were also parents, particularly those with children under the age of five, who wished to remain at home with their children until they went to school. These types of barriers could supersede the childcare related barriers, as they had to be addressed before parents were ready to consider the available childcare.

1.3.1.4 Implications for future policy

Overall, the evidence suggests that policy solutions need to address the dual aspects of the obstacles outlined above by continuing to improve childcare supply, accessibility and affordability, whilst at the same time also addressing the continuing need to prepare parents for work. Availability of childcare could be addressed, for example, for parents who work atypical hours by ensuring that childcare is in place during the night and at weekends.

2   Introduction

2.1   Background

The Department for Children, Schools and Families developed two closely related Pilot programmes in eleven Local Authority (LA) areas in England to help lone parents to move into work. The Pilots were solely funded by the Department for Work and Pensions. These were the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP) and the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP). The Pilots were designed to explore the assertion that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support (IS). The aim was to ensure a sufficient supply of childcare for lone parents to enable them to enter employment. Past research has found that non-working lone parents cite a lack of affordable, accessible childcare as a significant barrier to work[3]. Many lone parents express preferences for informal childcare, with insufficient trust in formal providers being a major issue[4]. It was hoped that the CT/ESC Pilots would show whether more lone parents claiming IS, take up employment opportunities when suitable formal childcare was made available to them through the ESCP, and if parents' knowledge of, and trust in, formal childcare was facilitated through the CTP.

In the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP), the Local Authority offered parents various opportunities to explore childcare covering:

- Childcare Chats (in-depth discussions with the LA about formal childcare)

- Accompanied Visits to childcare providers, and

- Childcare Tasters (the opportunity to try out formal childcare for free, for up to a week)

In the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP), the Local Authority supported initiatives to ensure a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible, formal childcare for lone parents to allow them to move into work. LAs also engaged with schools to integrate childcare with their other services, where possible.

Lone parents were the principal target group for the Pilots, but partners of benefit recipients who had childcare responsibilities were also included.

[3] Ford (1996), Marsh et al (1993), Marsh et al (2004)

[4] Bell et all (2005)

The first wave of Pilots started on 1st April 2004 in Bradford, Haringey and Lewisham Local Authorities. These three Local Authorities had very high numbers of lone parents claiming Income Support at the time. They were all operating the ESCP and CTP.

A second wave of Pilots started in October 2004 in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell and Greenwich. These areas were also operating the ESCP and CTP.

In January 2005 the third wave of Pilots began in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale. These areas only operated CTP.

All of the Pilots ended on 31st March 2006.

The Pilots were extended to additional Local Authorities in Wales and Scotland, however, this report refers only to the English Pilots[5].

Table 1. First, Second and Third Wave Pilot Areas

First Wave ESCP and CTP April 2004	Second Wave ESCP and CTP October 2004	Third Wave CTP only January 2005
Haringey	Leicestershire	Liverpool
Lewisham	Leicester City	Leeds
Bradford	Sandwell	Rochdale
	Greenwich	Birmingham

The CT/ESC Pilots were managed by the Local Authorities strategically and operationally in ways which best reflected local needs and circumstances, with no detailed guidance from DCSF. The Pilots were designed to work in close co-operation with Jobcentre Plus, schools and other stakeholders. These two factors resulted in considerable variation in delivery of the Pilot services between locations, making comparisons between areas complex.

This report covers the whole of the evaluation of the Pilots. Previous interim reports have focused on how the Pilots were set up and run in detail[6], and on the initial implementation (reported in January 2005)[7].

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[5] Wales has separately commissioned some qualitative research based on the design of this evaluation. Research has also been commissioned in Scotland.

[6] Green, E and Knight, G (2007) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Further Qualitative Research into Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/

2.2   The Pilots

2.2.1   Extended Schools Childcare Pilot

The Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) aimed to provide enough affordable formal childcare for lone parents with school aged children, particularly those on Income Support, to enable them to enter employment. Partners of benefits claimants with school aged children were a secondary target group for the Pilot. It was hoped that this Pilot would show how important the childcare barrier was, as well as identifying what other obstacles remained for lone parents and partners of benefits claimants around entering employment. The evaluation also aimed to examine how the impact of childcare was affected by the way the Pilots had been set up and operated.

The research looked at the Pilot's role in helping parents with school aged children, that is, aged between 5 and 14, or 16 for children with special needs. A secondary aim of the evaluation of ESCP was to look at whether the provision of childcare for younger or older children would help parents in the target groups enter employment.

Each local authority decided how best to use the Pilot funding, and whether and how to implement any extra childcare provision within their district. It was hoped that the Pilot would improve the capacity of the local Children's Information Services (CIS) to manage childcare vacancies, so that places were filled and existing providers become more viable and sustainable. It was expected that additional childcare would be created to meet demand.

It was envisaged that any new childcare provision would be based on networks centred on secondary schools already working as 'extended schools'. 'Extended schools' are schools which provide services for their pupils and the local community beyond the school day. Within ESCP, schools could either provide childcare themselves or work with other local providers, such as out of school clubs, childminders, nurseries or playgroups. It was expected that the childcare provision would be accessible to all local families, not just lone parents and partners of benefits claimants.

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[7] Barnard, H and Knight, G (2005) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Qualitative Research into Initial Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/SSU_2005_FR_010.pdf

2.2.2 Childcare Taster Pilot

The overall aim of the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP) was to help lone parents, and partners of benefits claimants, with childcare to build trust and confidence in using formal childcare. It provided parents with a chance to talk about childcare issues in some depth with a local authority worker (called 'Childcare Chats'); to visit childcare providers (called 'Accompanied Visits'); and to have a free experience of formal childcare (called 'Childcare Tasters'). Parents did not have to take up all three elements of the CTP but were free to choose elements in which to participate.

DWP and DCSF gave local authorities participating in CTP four objectives:

- To raise parents' awareness of the quality of formal childcare

- To address parents' concerns regarding using formal childcare, by providing information and giving a short experience of what such childcare would be like

- To help parents make choices about suitable childcare through clarifying the types available in the area, and the issues to be considered

- To help parents feel more comfortable with the thought of leaving their child(ren) with childcare providers and, where desired, to provide an opportunity for them to leave the child(ren) in the care of a provider for a short time

2.2.2.1 Childcare Chat

Childcare Chats consisted of one to one meetings with local authorities' Childcare Advisors (sometimes called Childcare Champions or Childcare Brokers[8]). The Childcare Advisor would discuss with the parent, in some depth, the type of childcare the parent would need (for example, childminder, nursery, after school club, home based care) and any concerns the parent might have regarding formal childcare.

Childcare Chats were available for all parents *eligible* for New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) or New Deal for Partners (NDP), although parents did not have to be participating in NDLP or NDP to take up a place. Parents did not have to be 'job ready' to have a Childcare Chat.

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[8] Hereafter Childcare Advisor will be used

2.2.2.2 Accompanied Visit

Accompanied Visits involved parents visiting childcare providers, usually in the company of a Childcare Advisor, with the Childcare Advisor having set up the visit(s). The same eligibility criteria applied as for Childcare Chats, however in practice some areas offered Accompanied Visits to all parents, whether or not they were eligible under the definitions of the Pilots.

2.2.2.3 Childcare Taster

Childcare Tasters allowed parents to experience between half a day and five days' worth of childcare. The Tasters provided the opportunity for parents to meet childcare providers, visit childcare settings, observe childcare in practice, including their own children being cared for and, where mutually agreed, for the children to be left in the care of the childcare provider for a period of up to a week.

Childcare Tasters were designed to:

- Help parents to overcome concerns they had about particular types of childcare

- Allow parents and children to sample different forms of childcare to judge which type of provision suited their needs best

The Childcare Taster was available to all NDLP and NDP participants and to parents participating within Employment Zone provision for whom childcare had been identified as a barrier to work.

2.3 Eligibility for the New Deal

New Deal for Lone Parents is a programme designed to help lone parents who want to work to find a job which suits their needs. The programme is open to lone parents who work less than 16 hours a week, or not at all, and whose youngest child is under 16 years of age.

New Deal for Partners is a programme designed to help partners of people of working age, claiming certain benefits, to find work or suitable training. People can join New Deal for Partners if they are the partner of a person claiming Job Seeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance or Pension Credit. People might also be eligible to join New Deal for Partners if they are part of a couple claiming Working Tax Credit, providing they work fewer than 16 hours a week. Someone is considered to be a partner if they are married or living together as if married.

2.4   Research Design

Qualitative interviews were undertaken with stakeholders[9] involved in the Pilots and with parents[10].   The study explored the views of parents who participated in the Pilots as well as those who did not, but who had been invited to take part.

The overall design of the research, in six phases, is shown in the table below:

Table 2. Phases of the research

Phase 1	Face to Face and telephone interviews with first wave LAs on initial implementation in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford
Phase 2	Telephone interviews with stakeholders in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale
Phase 3	Face to Face and telephone interviews with stakeholders in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford
Phase 4	Face to Face interviews with stakeholders in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale
Phase 5	Telephone interviews with stakeholders in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford
Phase 6	Face to Face interviews with participating and non-participating parents

The fieldwork with stakeholders took place in waves to capture information about the different phases of the Pilots: setting up; running; and evaluating towards the end of the

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[9] 'Stakeholders' refers to the organisations involved in the Pilots (Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus, Children's Information Services, childcare providers and schools).

[10] Although the Pilots were intended to include partners of benefit recipients who had childcare responsibilities, in the main the stakeholders targeted lone parents. In some areas this was because New Deal for Partners was not fully operational and in others stakeholders had decided that lone parents were a better target group. Consequently the parents interviewed for this research were those who were eligible in their own right, rather than the partners of benefits recipients.

life of the Pilots. Face to Face and Telephone interviews were used, as outlined in the table above. Telephone interviews were used for early and final interviews with stakeholders, where interviews were likely to be relatively short. Face to Face interviews were used for longer and potentially more complex interviews in the middle phases of the Pilots, when they had been up and running for some time.

Parents who had participated in the Pilots were interviewed in order to understand whether, and how, the Pilots had affected their views on using formal childcare and going back to work. Parents' experiences of participating in the Pilots were also explored.

Parents who had not participated in the Pilots, but who had been invited to take part were interviewed to explore their views on formal childcare and returning to work. Interviews also explored parents' reasons for non-participation to identify factors, in addition to childcare, which represent significant barriers to work.

All interviews with parents were recorded and transcribed and analysed using Matrix Mapping. Further details of the methodology can be found in the Appendices.

Fieldwork took place between February 2005 and July 2006.

Phase 1 is reported in detail in Barnard and Knight (2005)[11]. Phases 2 and 3 are reported in detail in the interim report on the study[12]. All phases are reported here.

2.5   About qualitative research

It is important to note that the methods employed in this research are qualitative in nature. This approach was adopted to allow for individuals' views and experiences to be explored in detail. Qualitative methods neither seek, nor allow, data to be given on the numbers of people holding a particular view nor having a particular set of experiences. The aim of qualitative research is to define and describe the range of emergent issues and explore linkages, rather than to measure their extent.

[11] Barnard, H and Knight, G (2005) Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Qualitative Research into Initial Implementation http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/SSU_2005_FR_010.pdf

[12] Green, E and Knight, G (2007) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Further Qualitative Research into Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/

Verbatim quotations are used throughout this report to illustrate points made; such quotations are referenced according to the quota characteristics.

2.6   Report Structure

This report does not refer to any individual areas by name, in order to preserve anonymity.

Chapter 3 discusses the development and running of Extended Schools Childcare Pilots. This work is reported in more detail in the Interim Report and the 2005 report into initial implementation.

Chapter 4 discusses the development and running of the Childcare Taster Pilots. This work has been reported in more detail in the Interim Report.

Chapter 5 looks at issues and problems reported by stakeholders during the life of the Pilots, together with any solutions found.

Chapter 6 discusses stakeholders' views on lessons learned from the Pilots, and their intentions for taking elements of the Pilots forward on their work.

Chapter 7 looks at the experiences of parents who participated in the Pilots, and the views of parents who were offered participation but declined it. The chapter also discusses the potential barriers to using formal childcare, as expressed by parents, and how the Pilots worked in relation to them.

Chapter 8 concludes the report, looking at whether the Pilots achieved their aims.

The Appendices give more information about the methodology used, subjects covered in the Topic Guides and some detail about analysis methods.

3 Developing and running Extended Schools Childcare Pilots

This chapter discusses the development and running of Extended Schools Childcare Pilots. A more detailed discussion of setting up and running ESCPs can be found in the Interim Report[13] and the 2005 report[14].

3.1 Background

The first wave of Pilots began in April 2004 in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford. The second wave began in October 2004 in Leicestershire, Leicester City, Sandwell and Greenwich. The LAs running Pilots in the first two waves also operated Childcare Taster Pilots.

A variety of stakeholders took part in the research:

- Local Authority staff involved with the Pilots

- Jobcentre Plus staff, particularly Lone Parent Advisors and New Deal Advisors

- Children's Information Service staff

- Staff in schools involved in ESCP, and

- Childcare providers, such as after school clubs

The main aim of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots (ESCP), as designed by DCSF, was to develop a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible childcare within the Pilot areas, to meet the needs of lone parents. ESCP was set up in response to evidence that available and accessible childcare was seen to be a substantial barrier to lone parents going back to work, or starting work.

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[13] Green, E and Knight, G (2007) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Further Qualitative Research into Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/

[14] Barnard, H and Knight, G (2005) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Qualitative Research into Initial Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/SSU_2005_FR_010.pdf

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Pilot areas were given the objective to develop childcare as DCSF believed that this would lead to better management of existing childcare places within particular areas, creating additional childcare places in or through schools where necessary. [15]

3.2   Outreach work

After initial scoping work some Pilot areas chose to use some of their ESCP funding to develop outreach work. Although stakeholders were aware of the intentions and aims of ESCP to develop childcare provision, and that outreach work was not part of the remit of the Pilot, they felt it was an important addition to the Pilot.

There were several reasons given for doing outreach work:

- Stakeholders' perceptions that parents were mostly not job ready. Development work done by some ESCPs led them to the conclusion that for some parents returning to work would be a long term goal, requiring sustained support and encouragement

  "In the beginning, the parents that I was supporting, they wasn't ready for work, because the ones that were, we found that the parents in the borough that are ready to go back to work, they just go back to work. They go along to the job centre, and they don't need any other support. But, the parents that we sort of ended up supporting, needed… they wanted to go into training, or they wanted just to find out a bit of information, and maybe they were thinking of going back to work next year, or in five years' time"
  (Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Development Officer)

- Stakeholders' perceptions that parents had financial concerns that delayed them searching for work, which needed addressing prior to offering childcare, for example, by giving information on Working Tax Credit

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[15] One area could not recruit to advertised posts for ESCP, and therefore the Pilot never got underway. Stakeholders believed that a major issue for people who might have applied for posts was the fact that the positions were temporary, due to the relatively short length of the Pilots. Issues around the timings of the Pilots are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

- In some Pilot areas Development Workers were put in place during the summer, when schools were closed. It was decided that, to make use of their time, they should begin their work by carrying out consultations with lone parents

- In one Pilot area stakeholders had found that there were vacancies in existing childcare provision, leading to them questioning whether there was sufficient demand for the current number of places

Two types of outreach work were undertaken:

- Identifying parents, giving them information and signposting them to other services, for example, referring them to the Jobcentre.

  Parents were identified in a number of ways, for example:

  - Staff from the pilot areas attempted to engage parents at schools and community settings, such as Children's Centres, and via the Jobcentre.

  - Development officers contacted schools within their area and liaised with the head teachers about how best to work with parents.

  - Joint stakeholder information events organised by the Local Authority, Jobcentre and Children's Information Service (CIS) were held within schools in order to engage parents. Outreach events were also held at other localities, such as at Sure Start events.

  - Development officers from the Local Authorities (in some areas) set up drop-in advice sessions and coffee mornings at schools for parents to talk to them about childcare, employment or training issues.

  - There were examples of development officers speaking to parents outside schools and supermarkets.

- Giving one-to-one support to parents and encouraging them to look for work by addressing the barriers they were facing, for example, spending time finding out what their worries were about skills deficits and helping to find courses to overcome them.

Some of the outreach work continued for the duration of the Pilot. In one area stakeholders continued to run 'back to work surgeries' in schools, Children's Centres and with Community Groups to engage with parents' needs for returning to work. At these 'surgeries' parents were given information about child tax credits, provided with

'better off' calculations and given information about childcare provision in their area. The stakeholders involved in the 'surgeries' took the view that they were arming parents with information about childcare and financial issues for when they were ready to consider working, rather than expecting them to look for work immediately. Stakeholders perceived that these aspects of the outreach work, as well as the wider one-to-one support they could give, were well received by parents, and they felt that they had been very successful in encouraging parents to view returning to work in a positive light, albeit as something for the future.

3.3   Developing childcare provision

LAs were given the flexibility to implement the Pilots to best meet local needs and circumstances. No specific targets to create a certain number of childcare places were given to Pilot areas, although a number of the Pilots areas pointed out that they had Sure Start targets (unconnected with ESCP and CTP) to create a specific number of childcare places, and were using funding from the ESCP to work towards achieving these targets.

The original remit of the ESCP work was to work with parents of school aged children (aged 5 to 14, or 16 for children with special needs). However, the Pilot areas generally focused on developing childcare within primary schools, because there was felt to be the greatest need for childcare provision within this age group (5 to 11).

The childcare provision that the LAs developed took the form of breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday provision. Development Officers discussed with the schools whether they were able to set up provision on the school grounds, or whether they would link with other schools and local childcare providers.

Stakeholders felt that work with secondary schools was a longer term goal.

In some Pilot areas, stakeholders decided to work with schools in their area which were already operating as 'Extended Schools'[16]. For example, one Pilot area was working with six Extended Schools, some of which were consortia made up of a number of different schools.

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[16] 'Extended Schools' are schools which provide services for their pupils and the local community beyond the school day.

Successful engagement of schools largely depended on the attitude of the headteacher and the ethos of the school. It also depended on the resources and facilities of the school.

3.3.1 Schools who did not wish to participate in ESCP

Among those schools not wishing to participate[17], three factors were identified by stakeholders:

- Not having the space to provide childcare on site

- Already having arrangements to provide access to childcare in the community

- Not wishing to create competition for childcare providers they were working with

Some schools were too small, and did not have the space to offer childcare provision. For example, they were already offering out of school hours activities and did not always have an appropriate area to offer new childcare provision. There were examples of schools working together to create childcare, and of schools working with independent childcare providers. There were also some instances where a private provider was already collecting children from the school and taking them to childcare provision within the community, and these schools were reluctant to create competition by starting up their own clubs.

When schools said that they did not wish to participate in ESCP, the Development Officers often tried to engage them with the Pilot at a basic level, for example, by asking the school to put information in their newsletter about LA services.

3.3.2 Working with schools interested in ESCP

Where interest in ESCP existed in schools Development Officers and extended schools co-ordinators worked out a business plan with the school. They looked at the school layout and helped them with the decision about whether to run the childcare provision themselves, or get a private provider to run the provision within the school. Schools

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[17] Schools who did not wish to participate in ESCP were not interviewed for this research. These findings are based on interviews with LA stakeholders who had tried to engage schools for ESCP.

were then helped to apply for funding, and support was given with applying for OFSTED registration.

Where schools did not have the space to develop provision on-site, staff would try to link the school with a voluntary or private organisation to ensure some childcare was available. In some cases they worked with a larger school offering childcare provision in the area, and arranged collections from smaller schools to increase access to childcare. Development Officers generally found that private providers were happy to collect children from schools in order to boost their intake. It is possible that this service could have been promoted more for schools who had declined participation in the Pilots on the grounds that they did not have room on their premises to develop provision.

Schools did their own marketing to advertise the provision. They felt that they knew the community, and thought that they could target their advertising in ways to make the provision successful. Based on the information available to them, LAs thought that few of the childcare places created through ESCP were filled by referrals from the Jobcentre, and some Pilot areas believed that the Jobcentre did not generally act as an entry point for lone parents into ESCP. There were examples of Jobcentre staff showing lone parents lists of schools with breakfast and after school clubs in their area, but there was no evidence of specific referrals.

Some schools said that parents had to be job ready before they could take up a place in ESCP provision.

Clearly, where good relationships were built between ESCP staff and schools, a positive outcome could be had, with schools, other stakeholders and parents all benefiting.

Summary

This chapter discussed the development and running of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots.

The main aim of ESCP was to develop a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible childcare within the Pilot areas to meet the needs of lone parents, with the objective of developing and managing existing childcare places and creating additional places in or through schools where necessary.

Scoping work in some areas showed that there were unfilled childcare places, leading to some stakeholders using ESCP funding to undertake outreach work. Outreach work was of two types: to identify parents, give them information and signpost them to other services; and giving one-to-one support to parents to encourage them to look for work by addressing the barriers they were facing.

4   Developing and running the Childcare Taster Pilots

This chapter describes the development and running of the Childcare Taster Pilots. A more detailed discussion of setting up and running CTPs can be found in the Interim Report[18] and the 2005 report[19].

4.1   Background

The first wave of Pilots began in April 2004 Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford. The second wave began in October 2004 in Leicestershire, Leicester City, Sandwell and Greenwich. The third wave of Pilots began in January 2005 in Liverpool, Leeds, Rochdale and Birmingham. Childcare Taster Pilots ran in all 11 LAs.

A variety of stakeholders took part in the research:

- Local Authority staff involved with the Pilots

- Jobcentre Plus staff, particularly Lone Parent Advisors and New Deal Advisors

- Children's Information Service staff

- Childcare providers, such as childminders and nursery staff

Parents were usually referred to CTP by Jobcentre Plus staff during Work Focused Interviews (WFIs). However, some parents were made aware of the Pilots during outreach events such as Discovery Weeks.

CTPs comprised three elements:

- Childcare Chats

- Accompanied Visits

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[18] Green, E and Knight, G (2007) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Further Qualitative Research into Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/

[19] Barnard, H and Knight, G (2005) *Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Qualitative Research into Initial Implementation* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/SSU_2005_FR_010.pdf

- Childcare Tasters

For information about how each of these Pilot elements worked, please see the Introduction in section 2.2.

LAs were free to brand CTPs in their own way, and to publicise them as they saw fit.

4.2   Engaging childcare providers

Pilot staff liaised with a range of childcare providers in their areas to see if they were interested in the Pilots. Stakeholders were keen to engage a range of providers to enable parents to experience a number of different types of childcare provision. Pilot areas decided that CTP would be most beneficial for children of pre-school age (0 to 5 years), and therefore mainly contacted nurseries and childminders for these age groups.

Generally, Pilot staff did not have difficulties engaging childcare providers.   Providers were happy to take part in CTP and could see advantages in participation – both in terms of giving them credibility by being associated with LAs and giving them publicity to enable them to fill vacancies where/when they occurred.   There were, however, some childcare providers who had problems during the course of the Pilots. These are discussed in section 5.6.

4.3   Engaging parents

Parents were informed about the Pilots either through Jobcentres, or through marketing carried out by Pilot staff, usually at Discovery Weeks and other outreach events or in Employment Zones.

Jobcentre staff informed parents about the Pilots during WFIs and also displayed information about the Pilots, and some sent out flyers with New Deal interview letters.

Some Jobcentre staff carried out group sessions with lone parents at day care centres, in partnership with other organisations, to inform them about the range of services available through Jobcentre Plus. They found that group settings worked well, as lone parents found them less intimidating than Jobcentre offices.

Although the original intent of the Pilots had been that they should also be available to partners of people on certain benefits, in fact very few partners were approached by Jobcentre staff. In some cases this was because New Deal for Partners had not started, or was only just starting, at the time of the Pilots. In other cases stakeholders

felt that the emphasis needed to be on lone parents, as they were seen to be in most need of the help that the Pilots offered.

4.4   Childcare Chats

During the Childcare Chats Advisors discussed the differences between different types of childcare providers, such as nurseries and childminders, and the range of childcare available in the area. They sought to understand what kind of childcare the parent was looking for, and if any concerns about childcare were preventing them from starting work.

Childcare Chats generally lasted between forty minutes and two hours, depending on the needs of the parent. Usually the discussions took place face to face, but sometimes they were carried out over the telephone. Childcare Advisors preferred talking to parents in person, as they believed that expressing understanding and empathy was essential and felt that it was sometimes difficult to do this over the telephone.

Generally, Childcare Advisors discovered that parents had a clear idea of the kind of childcare they wanted to use, even prior to the Childcare Chat. Parents generally expressed a preference for nurseries, rather than childminders, because stories in the media had made them worry about how safe childminders were. Parents perceived nurseries as offering more activities for their children, and would have more chances of interaction with other children than childminders could offer.

Childcare Advisors saw the Childcare Chat as a chance to address parents' concerns by reassuring them about formal childcare provision:

> *"…it's just to reassure them about childcare, what each provision offers, sort of the hours they do, the charges they cost, so the main purpose* [of the Childcare Chat] *is to really reassure them about childcare"*
> (Childcare Advisor, Local Authority)

Childcare Advisors used Chats to give parents information about financial help towards childcare, as parents were often daunted by the costs of it.

During Childcare Chats Advisors told eligible parents about the other elements of the Pilots: Accompanied Visits and Tasters.

4.5   Accompanied Visits

Eligible parents were offered accompanied visits to childcare providers. Some areas offered Accompanied Visits to all parents, whether or not they were eligible under the definitions of the Pilots. The Accompanied Visit was an opportunity to visit childcare providers in the company of a Childcare Advisor, or alone if they wished.

Parents were generally given a tour of the provision and given information about how the provider operated. Parents could also ask questions about the childcare provision, and see children experiencing it. Stakeholders reported that safety was a major concern for some parents:

> *"If the child has been home with the parents, or has always stayed with the family, usually there's the anxiety: 'Is my child going to be safe here, is he going to be well looked after, like he is used to?'… is he going to be alright?"*
> (Childcare provider: Nursery)

In some areas stakeholders did not always accompany parents on Visits. Two main reasons were given for this: firstly, not all areas had enough staff to accompany all parents on visits; and secondly, that not all parents wished to be accompanied. Some parents, therefore, had visits arranged for them by stakeholders, but undertook the visits alone.

4.6   Childcare Tasters

The third element of CTP was Childcare Tasters. Tasters were only available to parents on NDLP, although in some areas parents in the Employment Zone[20] organised by the Jobcentre were also eligible.

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[20] Employment Zones were created in areas where large numbers of people had been out of work for a long time. They were created to provide fresh ways of helping eligible people to find and keep jobs.

For more information about Employment Zone processes, see:
http://www.employmentzones.gov.uk

Usually parents were offered Tasters after they had visited providers, however, some parents did not visit, especially if they had already identified childcare provision to their liking.

Childcare Tasters gave parents up to one week of free childcare (or 10 half day sessions), although there was an example of one Pilot area offering two weeks of free childcare.

Childcare providers were paid by the LA for each session used by parents, usually up to approximately £25 per day.

The original aim of the Taster was to allow parents to test out different types of childcare provision. However, some Pilot areas were putting the Tasters to different uses:

• Trying out specific childcare providers to see if their child would settle with the provider, with the intention of the child attending the provider when the parent started work

• To cover the cost of the first week of childcare when parents found work

• To cover the cost of childcare before Tax Credits were received

• To allow the child to have childcare sessions over several weeks

• To give parents time to themselves

• To give parents time to job hunt, or prepare for work if they had already found a job

Childcare providers felt that it was better to build children up to full time attendance, for example, by starting with one or two sessions a week and then increasing the time/visits gradually. However, they could find that parents preferred to take the childcare in a block, especially if they had not been fully briefed by the Childcare Advisor. When parents took this view the Providers could find them demanding, since they felt building up was a valuable approach:

"The parents, when they came in they were demanding the sessions consecutively… Now, anybody who runs a childcare facility knows that that child has to settle in first. You can't just come in and say 'Here's my child, there's 2.5 hours'. We had a lot of issues with our first two or three parents, where they assumed that their child was going to walk in and they were going to walk out the

door on day one. And I had to basically sell the fact that the settling in period would be that we wouldn't charge them for the sessions, and by the end of the week the child would be here for two full days. So, therefore, they're not losing out. But it's quite hard, because, again, it's all about relationship, and about them thinking 'Well, I'm entitled to this, this is my money effectively, and this is the way I want it to be'".
(Childcare provider: Nursery)

4.7   How CTP and ESCP operated together

Pilots which started in Waves 1 and 2 (April and October 2004) operated both ESCP and CTP. Stakeholders held a range of views about how the two Pilots worked together[21].

There were Pilot areas who saw ESCP and CTP as distinct from each other, having little in common, but working well as separate entities. In these areas stakeholders thought the Pilots had different client groups, with ESCP focussing on parents of older children and CTP focussing on parents of younger children. In these areas there tended to be different Pilot staff, which contributed to the feeling of separateness.

In contrast, there were Pilot areas who branded the two Pilots together under one name. Here stakeholders saw the aim of both Pilots as addressing childcare as a barrier to work for lone parents. Stakeholders saw the Pilots as having complementary roles, with CTP stimulating demand for childcare provision and giving advice to parents, and ESCP developing childcare provision in response to this demand, and giving support to lone parents on a wider range of barriers to work. In some areas ESCP Development Officers referred parents to CTP, and CTP Childcare Advisors referred parents to ESCP where appropriate.

Summary

This chapter discussed the development and running of the Childcare Taster Pilots.

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[21] Unfortunately, it was not possible to gain an understanding of parent's views of the interaction of the Pilots as parent's did not recognise the operations of ESCP as such, hence we cannot gain an view of the interaction of the Pilots other than from Stakeholders.

Early work by Pilot staff involved liaising with childcare providers about participating in the Pilots and with colleagues in other organisations, such as Jobcentres. When the Pilots were up and running stakeholders engaged with parents in a number of different ways. Parents were usually informed about the Pilots through Jobcentres or via marketing carried out by Pilot staff, such as at Discovery Weeks.

Whilst the Pilots had been intended to include the partners of people on certain benefits, very few partners were approached by Jobcentre staff. There were two main reasons for this: New Deal for Partners had not been fully implemented in all Jobcentres; and there were some stakeholders who felt that the emphasis of the Pilots needed to be on lone parents, as they were seen as being most in need of the help available through the Pilots.

In areas where both ESCP and CTP were running, there were differing ways of operating:

• In some areas the two elements of the Pilots were seen as separate and distinct, working well as separate entities. Stakeholders in these areas were of the opinion that the two Pilot elements had different client groups, with ESCP being focused on parents of older children and CTP being aimed at parents of younger children.

• In other areas the two elements of the Pilots were branded together under one name. In these areas stakeholders viewed the aims of both Pilots as addressing childcare as a barrier to work for lone parents, with the two elements having complementary roles. CTP was viewed as stimulating demand for childcare provision, and giving advice to parents, an ESCP developing childcare provision in response to this demand.

5   Issues and problems identified by stakeholders

This chapter discusses stakeholders' views and experiences of problems arising from setting up and running the Pilots, together with any solutions they found, and suggestions for avoiding problems in the future.

There were six major areas of concern identified by stakeholders:

- The timescales of the Pilots, which caused problems in recruiting staff, and, for ESCP, fitting in with the school year

- Their desire for more guidance, particularly in the early stages of the Pilots

- Monitoring work on the Pilots, which had caused some confusion in the early stages of the Pilots, and the mechanics of which were interpreted differently by different Pilot areas

- Data sharing between different stakeholders, with stakeholders feeling that DCSF could have given more guidance/training on, and

- Workloads, which was particularly a problem for Jobcentre staff, who had no resources for the Pilots[22]

- Two issues were raised by Childcare providers. Firstly, there were providers who had committed to the Pilots but who had not had any parents referred to them. Secondly, there were providers who had withdrawn from the Pilots after having problems with some parents that had been referred to them.

Each of these issues will be discussed below.

5.1   Timescales

From the earliest contacts with stakeholders the timescales of the Pilots were identified as being unrealistic and problematic. A major issue was the length of time needed to

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[22] It should be pointed out that DWP provided all of the funding for the Pilots and JCP allocated CPM and Advisor resource and fully participated. JCP also committed resources at HQ level to put in place, co-ordinate and report the JCP performance statistics. Finally, they provided staff to attend both the management and project boards at all stages throughout the Pilots. However, the staff 'on the ground' in JCP were not always aware of this, and felt that the Pilots gave them extra work, on top of what was already expected of them.

recruit and train staff, and to establish relationships with schools and other stakeholders.

In some areas there were delays to the start of the Pilots, which exacerbated the timescale problem, and ultimately led to a relatively short running period since the end point was not extended.

For ESCP, being dependent on the school calendar meant that there were problems making contact with parents in the early stages of the Pilots. In addition, schools generally preferred to set up provision at the beginning of the school year, which, again, cut down on the amount of time the Pilots could run.

Applications for funding to create childcare provision within ESCP, together with OFSTED registration, were also potential causes of delays to the progress of Pilots.

Stakeholders also thought that the timescales meant that there was not sufficient time to see Pilot successes. Staff felt that moving into employment for lone parents was a long term goal, and that parents participating into the Pilots might not have moved into work by the end of the Pilot.

There were instances where the temporary nature of the Pilots caused problems in recruiting staff. In one area with funding for ESCP the Pilot did not run, as it proved impossible to recruit staff for it. Stakeholders in this area thought that other vacancies, advertised at similar times, had been more appealing to candidates because they were permanent positions.

5.2 The desire for more guidance

Stakeholders reported that they would have liked more guidance and support from DCSF and DWP. In particular, there was a desire for clear guidelines regarding the goals of the Pilots, and definitions of what would be classified as successes.

Lack of guidance was identified from the bidding stage of the Pilots, with stakeholders identifying gaps in terms of size and scope, for example, in one area a small scale project was proposed, but later it was found that there had been more money available than had been expected.

It was clear that some stakeholders had misunderstood the desire of DCSF for the second and third wave areas not to be distracted by examples of practice in the first

wave area, with some people being under the impression that DCSF were reluctant to share examples of good practice between Pilot areas[23].

There were examples of stakeholders who had made contact with other Pilots, particularly with those who were geographically close, to discuss issues arising, especially in the developmental stages of the schemes, although this was not facilitated by DCSF. Of particular help was sharing job descriptions for staff to be recruited for the Pilots.

As the Pilots developed the perceived need for direction and guidance from DCSF diminished, with stakeholders having clearer understanding of the Pilot aims. More detailed discussion of this issue is contained in the earlier interim report Green and Knight (2007).

A bigger issue for stakeholders was a perceived lack of direction on the requirements around monitoring information to be collected.

5.3   Monitoring issues

In the early stages of the Pilots there had been confusion about collecting statistical data for monitoring purposes. This continued for some time, with stakeholders feeling that they had not been given enough guidance about monitoring requirements. There was, however, evidence that stakeholders disliked collecting numerical data, as they felt that this did not fully reflect the type and extent of their work.

"… if you look at these figures you might think, it's not had a really big impact in supporting lone parents into work, when you see the actual… figure. But so many have gone into training with a view to going back to work. So many parents have been, are being, have been supported, and are still being supported. So this Pilot is going to have an impact at the end of this year, and next year. That's when you're going to see figures change"

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority)

Other issues raised regarding monitoring were:

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[23] The DCSF held operational workshops during the early months of the Pilots, and held a good practice workshop in May 2005

- The forms did not allow ESCPs to record outreach work, as it had not been originally intended that this would be an element of the Pilots

- Pilot areas were interpreting the monitoring forms differently, and therefore there were concerns that comparisons would not be possible, and progress would be hard to monitor

- Inaccurately recorded information caused difficulties in completing the monitoring forms, and therefore affected monitoring figures – for example, some stakeholders felt that schools did not always provide accurate data on take-up of childcare places

- Jobcentre staff did not always record referrals to the Pilots; this was put down to the busy nature of their jobs and the number of different initiatives they had to consider.

5.4   Data sharing issues

In the early stages of the Pilots there were issues about data sharing between Jobcentres and LAs.

These issues were resolved by:

- Putting in place referral sheets which asked parents to consent for their details to be passed to other stakeholders

- Situating Childcare Advisors in Jobcentres, so that parents could be immediately referred to them for a Childcare Chat

- Asking Lone Parent Advisors to address and send out information packs to parents, so that personal details did not have to be passed to LAs

Some issues on data sharing could not be resolved. Stakeholders did not feel that they could divulge information about specific parents, gathered whilst working with them, to stakeholders in other organisations. In some instances this created problems with tracking parents through the Pilots. LA Pilot staff generally liaised directly with parents to discover whether they had attended interviews at the Jobcentre, or if they had attended a Taster, and kept a record of parents' progress, rather than seeking this information from other Pilot staff.

There were, however, examples of stakeholders checking with each other about parents' progress through the Pilots. For example, Childcare Advisors based in Jobcentres would sometimes inform Lone Parent Advisors if a parent failed to attend a

Chat or a Taster. There were concerns amongst stakeholders over whether this breached data protection rules.

5.5 Workloads

Early concerns about staff workloads decreased when Pilots became operational, and had recruited staff. The exception to this, however, was in Jobcentres, who were not resourced for the Pilots, and there were instances where Childcare Partnership Managers (CPMs) in Jobcentres had reduced their role in promoting the Pilots and encouraged the LA to increase their role accordingly:

> *"I initially took it as my responsibility not only to promote it, but also to ensure that there were adequate referrals… there was an understanding that I had to stop doing that; I didn't have any additional resources… so a decision had to be made. The funding had gone to the Local Authority, so they then have to come back and market it as effectively as they can, with the support from the CPM"*
> (Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre)

Lone Parent Advisors in Jobcentres described how they were often very busy. They also talked about the need to discuss a variety of initiatives during their discussions with parents, and it appeared that the Pilots were not always prioritised.

5.6 Issues for Childcare Providers

Some childcare providers who had worked with the Pilots, especially those who were able to offer Tasters to parents, identified problems.

There were some providers who had been contacted by stakeholders, and had agreed to participate in the Pilots, but who had had very few parents coming to them[24]. These providers said that they had not been given any reasons for not having had more parents referred to them.

> *"We filled in all these forms, and we had all this big rush in the beginning, and then it just died out"*
> (Childcare Provider, Childminder, CTP)

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[24] There were no explanations from stakeholders as to how they selected particular providers for the Pilots.

Other providers had had problems with getting payment from parents referred through the Pilots.

> *"You're trying to do your best by those parents, and then you've got all the issues of cheques bouncing, and chasing them, and all that. After the last parent left about 5 or 6 months ago, I phoned them up* [CTP staff] *and I said to them 'Listen, I'm not accepting anyone, don't send me anymore'"*
> (Childcare Provider, Nursery, CTP)

It appears that in some areas, after initial contact was made, and agreement was reached, stakeholders did not have ongoing contact with childcare providers, which might have overcome some of these issues.

Summary

This chapter discussed stakeholders' views and experiences of problems arising from setting up and running the Pilots, and the solutions they found, together with their suggestions for avoiding such problems in the future.

Six main areas of concern were identified:

- The timescales of the Pilots, which caused problems in recruiting staff, and, for ESCP, fitting in with the school year

- Stakeholders' desire for more guidance, particularly early in the Pilots

- Monitoring work on the Pilots, which caused some confusion amongst stakeholders

- Data sharing between stakeholders

- Workloads

- Some childcare providers reported having made a commitment to the Pilots, but had not had any parents referred to them; other providers had withdrawn from the Pilots after having some problems with parents who had been referred to them

In the main these issues were experienced in the early stages of the Pilots, and to a large degree were overcome as the Pilot progressed. There was, however, one area

which could not recruit anyone to work in the proposed ESCP, which, therefore, had not run.

6 Stakeholders' reflections on the Pilots

This chapter is based on the later interviews with stakeholders, towards the end of, or shortly after the Pilots. At this stage many of the early problems had been ironed out, and the Pilots had, generally, run successfully for some time. Stakeholders were asked about what aspects of the Pilots had worked particularly well, the lessons they had learnt from the Pilots, and what they would take forward from them.

6.1 Aspects of the Pilots which worked particularly well

Two aspects were generally mentioned by stakeholders as having worked particularly well. Childcare Chats, an element of CTP, were thought to have been the key success of the Pilot, and working with other stakeholders was a benefit arising from the Pilots.

6.1.1 Childcare Chats

Stakeholders thought that the Chats benefited parents by giving them information about childcare in the area, and addressing the parents' questions and queries about formal childcare. Some Jobcentre staff had been able to give similar information, but this relied on staff having time to spend with the parents, as well as being well informed about formal childcare in their area, and this did not happen universally. Thus, although in some areas Childcare Chats duplicated work being done in Jobcentres, this was not normally the case.

Stakeholders thought that the Childcare Chats would be the easiest element of the Pilots to take forward in their work after funding ended, and a number reported that this was the intended course of action.

6.1.2 Interagency working

The contacts stakeholders made with colleagues in other agencies working on the Pilots was seen to be very beneficial. Stakeholders had often known the names of people in other organisations, but had not met them. When they did meet, as a consequence of working together on the Pilots, they felt that having personal contact was beneficial. The benefits included simple things, such as being able to put a face to a name and having a more complete contact list of other people working in children's services.

Although it would have been possible for these contacts to have been made without the Pilots, it seems that coming together for the Pilots forged links which were set to continue in stakeholders' future work.

6.2 Changes stakeholders would have liked to have made

As discussed in Chapter 5, stakeholders identified some elements of the Pilots which had been problematic. When asked about what they would have liked to have changed, the similar issues about setting up the Pilots were raised:

- The timescales of the Pilots, with stakeholders saying they would have liked the Pilots to run for longer, or permanently

- The desire for more guidance on setting up the Pilots

- More guidance/training on data protection issues, and

- Clearer requirements on monitoring the Pilots

Other elements identified by stakeholders as warranting change were:

6.2.1 Definitions of success

Stakeholders felt that there were few clear definitions of 'success' for the Pilots. Although they were usually clear on the aims of the Pilots stakeholders felt that success could not just be measured by the numbers of parents going through the system. The definitions of success were understood to be the combination of meeting the aims set out for the Pilots and the information which was collected in the monitoring, and hence related to the number of participants, and in particular the number of participants gaining employment after participation. There were two views expressed on this issue.

Firstly, some stakeholders expressed the view that gathering data on numbers going through the system would not indicate how effective the Pilots had been. Some stakeholders tried to track parents to see what they did after the Pilots, but it was felt that this was not always possible (a view which related to data protection and information sharing). Stakeholders did not always know whether parents' views had changed about formal childcare or returning to work, or, indeed, whether parents had moved into work or training as a result of participating in the Pilots.

Secondly, there was the view that participating in the Pilots was unlikely, for many parents, to lead directly to them going into work or training in the short term. From this perspective, moving into work was perceived as a relatively long term goal for some parents. Thus, the aims of the Pilots were difficult to measure during their lifetime, as it

was likely to be some time into the future before parents were going to put their experience to use.

6.2.2 Removal of eligibility restrictions

Some stakeholders were of the opinion that the Pilots should have been made available to all parents, not just lone parents who were not working. They felt that some partnered parents would have benefited from the Pilots, as well as some working parents who were looking for childcare, or looking to change their childcare arrangements. Although they understood the reasons why the Pilots had been put in place for certain groups, stakeholders would have liked to open them up to any parent who needed them.

6.3 Going forward

As mentioned above, stakeholders were keen to take forward elements of the Pilots into their future work, particularly the Childcare Chats. There were two ways in which this was being addressed. Firstly, in some areas funding was being sought, or had been found, to keep in place Childcare Advisors, who could continue to offer Childcare Chats and arrange for parents to visit childcare providers. Secondly, Pilot staff who continued to work in LAs were keen to continue offering Childcare Chats to parents.

Summary

This chapter discussed the stakeholders' views and reflections towards the end of the Pilots. By the time these interviews were conducted many of the early problems reported by stakeholders had been resolved, and the Pilots had generally run successfully. Aspects of the Pilots which had worked well and lessons learnt from the Pilots were discussed.

Two aspects of the Pilots were deemed to have worked particularly well: Childcare Chats and Interagency working.

Stakeholders believed that the Chats had benefited parents by giving them knowledge about childcare in their area, and by addressing questions parents had about formal childcare. It was felt that the Chats were the easiest element of the Pilots to take forward into their future work.

Working with stakeholders and colleagues from different agencies had been seen as beneficial for the stakeholders themselves.

Several areas for change were identified by the stakeholders.

Of particular note was a requirement for clearer definitions of success, with a feeling that gathering data on the numbers of parents going through the system did not adequately reflect how effective the Pilots had been. Further, there was the view that participating in the Pilots was unlikely, for many parents, to lead directly to them going into work or training in the short term, however, it was felt that the parents had benefited, and that the results were likely to be seen in the longer term, possibly long after the Pilots had ended.

There was also a view from some stakeholders that the Pilots should have been made available to all parents, not just lone parents who were not working, so that a far wider range of people could have benefited from the services made available from the Pilots.

7   Participating Parents' experiences

This chapter discusses the experiences of parents who participated in the Pilots.

Sixty participating parents were interviewed[25]. Details of the methodology can be found in the Appendix.

Data from participating parents was analysed by geographical area.   The data were also explored in the context of sub-groups[26].   No differences were found in the views expressed by any of the sub-groups, with the exception of parents with a youngest child who was under school age and their attitude to returning to work (see 7.5).   It should be noted however, that other studies have reported particular issues for parents from some minority ethnic groups[27].   The sampling frame for this study contained only small numbers of parents from minority ethnic groups; it is possible that larger numbers of BME parents took part in the Pilots, but did not give their permission to be contacted for the evaluation.   It is also possible that had larger numbers of parents from BME groups taken part in the research some differences in perceptions, views and requirements for childcare might have been found.

The chapter begins by looking at the experiences of parents who participated in the Pilots, then goes on to discuss the potential barriers to using formal childcare, as expressed by parents, and how the Pilots worked in relation to these 'sticking points'. Finally, the chapter explores parents' suggestions for changes to the Pilots.

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[25] It had been intended to include all those eligible for participation in the sample of parents interviewed, including partners of benefits claimants, as outlined in Chapter 2.   However, as became clear from the Stakeholder stages of the work, many aimed the Pilots at lone parents; this was reflected in the sampling frame supplied, where there were very small numbers of partners.   There were 3 participating parents in the respondent sample who had partners at the time of the pilot.   Similarly, there were 3 non-participating parents with partners in the respondent sample.   There were no differences between those with partners and those without, therefore the whole samples are reported on below.   The interviewees were all parents who were eligible for the Pilots in their own right, not as partners of benefit claimants.

[26] Sub-groups explored were: ethnicity, age of youngest child, number of children, and whether parent had a partner.   These were also quotas for recruitment of parents.   Some sub-groups contained very few examples.

[27] For example, Tackey et al (2006) who explored barriers to work for Pakistani and Bangladeshi people in Britain.

In this section, unless otherwise specified, parents were talking about formal childcare.

7.1   Participating parents

Interviews with parents took place up to a year after their initial contact with the Pilots[28], and some people had difficulty remembering back to what had taken place. Other parents, however, had clear memories of their involvement. The most difficult aspect to distinguish, for parents, was involvement in ESCP, especially those who had, according to LA records, had 'outreach' contact.

Participating parents were asked about:

- Their initial experiences of the Pilots

- Details of the different elements they participated in

- The impact participating in the Pilots had on their views of childcare

- The impact of the Pilot on changing attitudes / behaviour in relation to returning to work, increasing working hours or going into training

- Whether they had any suggestions for changes to the way in which the Pilot worked

The following sections describe the parents' views in detail.

7.2   Initial experiences of the Pilots

Generally, parents were first made aware of the Pilots through Jobcentres, usually during a Work Focused Interview (WFI) or from a Lone Parent Advisor. Not all parents felt fully informed about the Pilots after their initial conversation with Jobcentre Plus staff. The amount of information they were given ranged from:

- A leaflet about childcare and/or contact details of the childcare advisor

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[28] Interviews with parents all took place after the Pilots had finished. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, for participating parents, we wished to ensure that they had completed their participation in the Pilots, and interviewing during the course of the Pilots could have meant that people went on to experience other elements after being interviewed. Secondly, in terms of non-participating parents, it was important to capture people who had truly not participated, rather than having deferred participation.

- A short discussion relating to what the childcare advisor might be able to help them with, including, in some cases, the fact that there might be opportunities to try out childcare free of charge

"You can go in for a the Taster, a five days Taster, if he likes it and I like it then it's worth going back into work. To see it working out that it was worth going back into work"
    (Participating parent)

- Very little information except that the childcare advisor would be able to help with 'childcare issues'

For many parents who showed an interest in meeting a childcare advisor Jobcentre Plus staff arranged appointments by telephoning the childcare advisor on the parents' behalf during WFIs or other meetings.

Some parents found the amount of written information given to them by childcare advisors a little overwhelming, for example one woman described it as *"absolutely millions [of pieces of information]"*.

7.3   Elements of the Pilots experienced by parents

7.3.1   Childcare Chat

7.3.1.1   Management of Childcare Chats

Generally parents had an initial Childcare Chat to discuss their childcare needs in detail before they moved on to other elements of the Pilots. Chats were generally face to face meetings between a childcare advisor and a parent, although some Chats were carried out over the telephone.

Childcare advisors offered chats in different locations:

- Jobcentre Plus offices

- Outreach events

- Local Authority offices

- Gingerbread[29] premises

- Sure Start premises

- Family Centres

- Colleges

- In parents' homes

Childcare advisors chose locations which they felt would best meet the needs of parents, and where they could organise a space for their work.

In certain cases childcare advisors discovered during Childcare Chats that parents were not eligible for further participation in the Pilots, to the disappointment of the parents involved. For example one parent was on maternity leave and intended going back to her job, and was told during a Chat that she could not have Accompanied Visits or Tasters. Another parent had put her child on a waiting list for a nursery, and was told this made her ineligible for further participation.

7.3.1.2 Parents' views of Childcare Chats

Parents were generally positive in their views of the childcare advisors, saying that they were knowledgeable about childcare availability, easy to talk to and reassuring.

"My initial impression is she was really nice, really relaxed. She was very honest and tried to help as much as she could. I couldn't fault her in any way or form, she was very informative"
   (Participating parent)

Overall, the chat was seen as a positive experience, with parents saying that:

- They had learnt things about childcare that were previously unknown to them

- It was useful to have someone providing information all in one place

- The chats were good because lone parents can feel very isolated

- They felt able to go out and find out more about childcare

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[29] A charitable support organisation for lone parents and their children, running in England and Wales.

- They had been informed about different types of childcare, including alternatives not thought of, or known about, before

"I didn't think there was any other type of childcare, I just thought it was nursery for her age, that was the only thing I thought was available, other than a private childminder"
(Participating parent)

- They had been offered further participation in the Pilots, including a free Taster

For some parents the Chats were not such a positive experience because:

- They did not wish to work at the time of the Chats, or in the near future, and therefore they were not particularly interested

- They discovered during the Chats that they would need to work more hours than they wished to in order to be better off working and paying for childcare[30]

- There was no suitable childcare available in their area, for example, during antisocial hours worked on nightshifts

7.3.2 Accompanied Visits

7.3.2.1 Management of Accompanied Visits

Although the title of this element was 'accompanied visit', it was usual for parents to visit childcare providers on their own. The reasons given for undertaking visits alone were:

- Parents preferred/were happy to go unaccompanied

- There were not enough CTP staff to accompany parents

- Already knew the provider

- Went with a friend or relative (usually their mother)

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[30] This reflects information gathered about parents' opinions of why the Chats were not a positive experience. It is not clear whether this was based on explicit calculations, and it is also not clear whether the parents came to this conclusion based on the evidence presented to them or a calculation was made by the advisor.

- The parent set up the visit independently

7.3.2.2 Parents' views of Accompanied Visits

Where parents were accompanied by childcare advisors they welcomed having an advocate with knowledge and expertise to ask questions on their behalf. This was particularly important for parents who lacked confidence.

"I'm not a very confident person, especially when it comes to making quite serious decisions - something that will make an impact on the child and the parent; and I wanted that reassurance"
   (Participating parent)

In one case a parent who had experienced both an accompanied and an unaccompanied visit found the accompanied visit to be better. She said she gained reassurance by having someone to talk to about her views.

There were some parents who had been offered visits but had declined them, usually because parents did not feel work ready. Either they did not see the point in visiting childcare providers, or did not want to waste people's time.

Some parents said that they had not been offered visits. The following reasons were given:

- It had not been discussed with them

- Parents were already familiar with their provider of choice, and went straight into Tasters

"I know loads of people around here whose kids have gone there so I knew it was a good nursery anyway"
   (Participating parent)

- Parents had already found employment and needed to try out childcare quickly

- Parents had already viewed nurseries independently, so it was not necessary for them to visit

- Parents were told they were not eligible

- The first day of a Taster acted in lieu of a visit

CTP was mainly aimed at parents with younger children, so the childcare provision required was usually in nurseries or childminders. Generally, parents made just one visit to nurseries or childminders, however there was some indication of parents visiting more than one to make comparisons.

Overall, where visits had been undertaken they were found to be helpful. The helpful aspects of the visits were seen to be:

- The childcare advisor made all the arrangements

- The childcare advisors found out whether the providers would be able to accommodate Tasters if the parent liked what they saw

- Visits provided the opportunity to see how the childcare providers operated, specifically:

    o How staff interacted with children

    o The routines and practices of the setting, for example, how they coped with food for the children and changing nappies

    o The activities which were provided for children

    o The security, health and safety of a setting

    o Staff to children ratios

    o The costs of using providers

    o The rules providers had

"How they were with the children, how they looked after the children, looking at the staff and to see if health and safety….look[ing to see] if there's any objects that weren't safe to be there…"
(Participating parent)

- Parents gained an opportunity to see how their child reacted within childcare

- In the case of childminders, parents welcomed the opportunity to get a feel for what the provider was like as a person

- Nursery staff were seen as friendly and willing to be helpful

"As soon as I walked in there they had the children off doing little tasks while somebody stayed and had the chat with me"
(Participating parent)

"He [the owner / manager] explained everything. He showed me where they do the cooking, where the children play, where they sit and write, and his staff….I felt it was ok, he told me a lot of information"
(Participating parent)

7.3.3 Tasters

7.3.3.1 Use of Childcare Tasters

The intent of the Tasters was to allow parents, and their children, to try one or more types of childcare for up to five full days.

There was variation in the way time in childcare provision was used by parents, for example, some parents chose to have ten half days of childcare over two weeks; others chose ten sessions over four weeks building up the time they left their child. Other parents preferred to use the sessions all together, giving them a complete week of childcare. As discussed in Chapter 4, childcare providers thought that it was better for children to build up to full time childcare. No parents were interviewed who had met resistance to their preferred usage of the Tasters from childcare providers, this does not mean that they do not exist, however.

Generally parents chose to use Taster sessions with only one childcare provider, usually because they had decided on the provider they wished to use and wanted to maximise their child's time there. However, although this was the usual format for Childcare Tasters in practice, in fact some parents did trial more than one provider, but this was not common.

Tasters were used in several different ways:

- Trying out provision

"The fact that you got to 'try before you buy' so to speak was a massive help"
(Participating parent)

- Getting children who were used to part time childcare used to full time childcare

- To provide free childcare for the first week of parents' work

- To give parents time to themselves

- To allow parents to job search

"It was nice cos it gave me time to sort things out with my job and to go for interviews, and to go [to the Jobcentre] on my own, cos I used to take her with me anyway"
  (Participating parent)

7.3.3.2 Parents' views of Childcare Tasters

Usually parents' experiences of Tasters were positive, with children enjoying their time in childcare provision, and parents feeling reassured and more confident about leaving them. Even where parents had decided, prior to participating in the Pilots, what sort of childcare they were looking for, the Taster sessions served to reinforce their opinion.

"[Having a Taster like this] tells you there are people out there that you can trust and that are reliable. You can totally trust them with your baby, and they are capable and reliable and they have training and do a good job"
  (Participating parent)

Tasters, like Visits, provided parents who had previously been mistrustful of formal childcare with evidence and information which addressed their concerns. Tasters also let parents who had been reluctant to leave their children in childcare to experience it with support from Childcare Advisors. There was evidence that these parents' views had changed. Firstly, parents saw that childcare could provide their child with a wider experience and an opportunity to mix with other children, so enhancing their child's development. Secondly, parents saw that childcare providers could be trusted.

Conversely, in one LA area there were more parents than usual who withdrew their children from Taster sessions because they felt that their children were not settling.[31]

For some respondents, participating in the Tasters had helped them to feel that working was more feasible than they had previously thought, and resulted in increased levels of confidence about returning to work. The exception to this was when parents were likely to be working irregular hours or shift work, where the Tasters highlighted the difficulties in fitting working hours with childcare provision.

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[31] The parent data was mainly analysed by area. This was the only unique issue which arose.

Clearly, the Childcare Tasters were of great benefit to most of the parents who used them, and were instrumental in the Pilots meeting the aim of helping parents to overcome their concerns about using formal childcare.

7.4 Elements of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots Experienced by Parents

7.4.1 Extended schools

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, parents had little to say about the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots. Few parents in the sample appeared to have been told about this element of the Pilot, or to have been offered visits or Tasters in relation to extended schools.

One parent who tried out an after school club for her children was very impressed with the activities which were on offer and the children enjoyed their time there. The fact that the children were collected from school and taken to the after school club, which was on another site, made the club a feasible option for this parent.

Another parent who tried an after school club thought that the provision was good, but too expensive at £5 per child.

7.4.2 Outreach work

Very few parents recognised that they had participated in outreach work. All those who talked about this provision came from one Pilot area. Parents mentioned participating in outreach in the following ways:

- A back to work skills course

- A coffee club meeting about childcare run by a childcare advisor

- A meeting in a school about childcare

It is possible that other parents did actually participate in outreach work through ESCP, but did not recognise it as such.

7.5 The impact participating in the Pilots had on parents' views about formal childcare

Overall participation in the Pilots appears to have had a positive effect on parents' views about formal childcare for those parents who were worried about it. The following areas were perceived as having had positive influences:

- Finding out about costs, and that there was help to pay for childcare

"I didn't know that Tax Credits do pay 30 percent[32] of….I didn't know at first….I was chuffed. I was relieved because it's a lot of money for childcare"
   (Participating parent)

- Finding out about different types of childcare

- Encouraging confidence in the idea of using childcare, and knowing that the providers listed were known to childcare services

- Altering pre-conceived ideas, particularly about nurseries and childminders

"I've got a bit more faith in the nurseries than I might have had before"
(Participating parent)

Some parents who had experienced the Childcare Chat, but not taken up Accompanied Visits or Tasters, thought that the Chat had been helpful, but had not altered their views; others felt that it had not had an impact because they had not been actively looking for work.

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[32] This may be the proportion covered under this individual's circumstances. In fact the Working Tax Credits (WTC) childcare element can pay up to 80% of childcare costs for eligible childcare in 2007 (70% up to 2006), however this is subject to the maximum weekly limit for eligible childcare costs– in 2006 this was £175 maximum eligible cost per week if you're paying for one child; £300 maximum eligible cost per week if you're paying for two or more children. If childcare costs are above this limit, then the proportion of childcare costs covered falls to less than 80%. Note WTC requires work of at least 16 hours per week for those with dependent children, and has other requirements and elements related to income and other aspects. See
http://www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/qualify/WhatAreTaxCredits.aspx

7.6 The impact of Pilots on changing attitudes or behaviours about returning to work, increasing working hours or going into training

Some participants had already made the decision to return to work before being offered participation in the Pilots whilst some others felt that they were not work ready either before or after participation in the Pilots.

Generally, parents felt that participating in the Pilots had helped them to think about returning to work because:

- They now knew they could receive help to find suitable childcare

- They discovered that they could get help with the costs of childcare through Working Tax Credits

- They now felt more positive about the idea of leaving their children in formal childcare

- Having visited childcare providers, and left their children there for some time, provided peace of mind, as parents were more confident that their child would be happy

- Felt increased enthusiasm for returning to work, knowing that childcare could be taken care of

"This is my golden opportunity. I mean, if they want their whole lives improved, you know, we are renting this house, we just have little money, limited money, so I told them if you want life to improve I need to do this teachers' training, you know"
    (Participating parent)

"Everything fell perfect. Everything did. It fell perfect and the job's fantastic. Every school, nursery, everything"
    (Participating parent)

However, there were parents for whom the Pilots led to no improvement in their prospect of returning to work.

For a few parents participating in the Pilots had made them realise that returning to work might not be viable, even if they had previously thought that they wanted to. Two main points were raised here: firstly, that finding childcare for parents working in jobs which entailed non-standard hours, for example nursing, was extremely difficult; secondly some parents felt that they would need to work more hours than they wanted,

to make working financially viable for them. For these parents, 'the childcare barrier' remained a hindrance to the prospect of returning to work, as there were aspects of childcare problems that were not addressed by the Pilots.

The only difference in attitude between participating parents was amongst those with children under school age. There was a common view from this sub-group that they wished to wait until their children were older before looking for work. For these parents, their views hindered the prospect of returning to work.

7.7   Parents' suggestions for changes to the Pilots

Generally, parents were happy with the Pilots as they ran, but they made some suggestions about changes which could be considered.

- **The Pilots could have been more widely advertised**
  There was a recurring theme that the Pilots would have been more widely used if other parents had known about them.

"They should advertise it because I didn't know until I went to see [the childcare advisor]… I didn't know anything about the Pilot trial and that you can speak to somebody in childcare"
   (Participating parent)

- **Ensuring follow up**
  Some parents felt that it would have been useful to have had more follow up from Childcare Advisors after Visits and Tasters, and once they were in work, for example to be asked how things were going for them with the childcare they were using.

- **Offer information, Chats, Visits and Tasters once a job has been secured**
  Some parents felt that offering the Pilot before parents have a job leaves them with too much to do in terms of job searching and trying out childcare.

- **Improve availability of childcare places**
  In some areas parents were disappointed to have Chats and then to find that there were no childcare places available in their area. For others there were places which were not convenient for them (for example, not on their way to work, or not providing childcare that matched their hours of work, or for antisocial hours).

- **Ensure childcare hours correspond to working hours**

Parents expressed the need to get children into childcare before the start of the working day, so childcare needed to be available early; this was not always available. For some there were no places at the times they would need (for example, in the evenings and at weekends when jobs in call centres were available).

- **Childcare providers to be more informed about the Taster scheme**
  In some areas parents felt that there could have been more childcare providers in the Taster scheme, giving a wider range of choice in terms of location and type of childcare.

- **The Pilots should be open to everyone**
  It was felt that the Pilots should not only be available to lone parents, and partners of benefits claimants, or to the unemployed, but should be available to all parents, whatever their circumstances.

Summary

This chapter discussed the views and experiences of parents who had participated in the Pilots.

Generally, the various elements of the Pilots were seen in a positive light, however parents had little to say about the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots, as they had not usually realised that they were receiving services which were part of the Pilots.

The Pilots appear to have had a positive effect on parents' views of formal childcare.

In terms of parents' attitudes towards work and training, for many there was a beneficial effect, as they had more knowledge about childcare, and were more positive about placing their children in formal childcare settings. However, there were some parents who realised, as a result of the Pilots, that they were not currently in a position to return to work, regardless of whether they wanted to or not: working non-standard hours (and therefore finding it extremely difficult to find childcare) and having to work more hours than they wanted to to make working financially viable were the two main reasons given for this. For parents whose children were under school age there was a common view that they wished to wait until their child was older before they returned to work.

Parents had several suggestions for changes to the Pilots, generally to make them available to a larger group of people, and at points in their life when they would be of

most benefit, such as when children were at school age, and when parents were work ready. They also felt that there should be assurance that childcare should be available at the times it was most needed, in terms of corresponding with their working hours.

8   Non-participating parents

This chapter explores the reasons why parents did not participate in the Pilots.

Thirty six parents who had been offered participation in the Pilots, but who had declined, were interviewed to gather their views about why the Pilots did not appeal to them.

A sample taken from a database is a 'snapshot' of how things stood on the day that the sample was extracted. For this research a sample of non-participating parents was taken after the Pilots had ended to ensure that as few as possible had decided to participate after the sample was taken. This meant, however, that some interviews took place up to a year after parents had been offered participation in the Pilots. Consequently some respondents did not remember being offered participation[33].

Non-participating parents were asked about:

- Their views on returning to work, if they were not working

- Their experience of, and views about, childcare

- Their views about being offered participation in the Pilots and why they did not take up the offer

- Whether there was anything which would have made the Pilots more appealing to them

Each of these will be examined in turn.

As with participating parents, analysis of the data from non-participating parents was undertaken by geographical area. Sub-groups both within and outside[34] of areas were

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[33] Interviews with parents all took place after the Pilots had finished. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, for participating parents, we wished to ensure that they had completed their participation in the Pilots, and interviewing during the course of the Pilots could have meant that people went on to experience other elements after being interviewed. Secondly, in terms of non-participating parents, it was important to capture people who had truly not participated, rather than having deferred participation.

[34] Sub-groups explored were: ethnicity, age of youngest child, number of children, and whether parent had a partner. These were also quotas to reflect different types of participation in the Pilots. Some sub-groups contained very few people.

explored in the analysis, however, no differences were found with the exception of parents with a youngest child who was under school age and their attitude to returning to work. As discussed in Chapter 7, there were very few non-participating parents participating from minority ethnic groups in this study. Had it been possible to include more people from BME groups differences in perceptions, views and requirements for childcare might have been found.

In this section, unless otherwise specified, parents were talking about formal childcare.

8.1   Non-participating parents' views on returning to work

There was no general antipathy amongst non-participating parents towards the idea of returning to work. There were a variety of circumstances and related views expressed about returning to work, with parents:

- Already working part time but not wanting to work full time

- Seeking work

- Undertaking, or looking for, education and training

- Waiting to return to work when their child was older

8.1.1   Already working part time

There were parents who were already working part time, and who were happy doing so, but they did not want to look for more hours because they believed that they would be worse off financially, due to loss of benefits. These parents already had childcare covering their working hours. This belief often arose from information provided by advisors about the gains from working in their case:

"They actually said, because I wasn't on Income Support that I could earn up to £20 a week, so she said if it's minimum wage you can work 4 hours. So I said that doesn't give me much incentive to go back to work. She said if you work any more, whatever you earn is deducted pound for pound from your benefit. Well nobody is going to work for nothing"
    (Non-participating parent)

8.1.2   Seeking work

There were parents who were actively seeking work. Two main reasons were given for wishing to return to work:

- Financial – to increase family income

- Boredom with being at home

Amongst those seeking work were parents who had applied for jobs but had not had any success, citing lack of experience and/or lack of qualifications as the reasons. Some parents also felt that there were employers who perceived lone parents as a liability in employment terms.

"I've got qualifications. I've got loads. It's just that I've got no experience or I don't know, they might class me as unreliable because I'm a lone parent"
    (Non-participating parent)

There were also parents in particular circumstances which made working difficult, for example, having children with special needs.

"The key factor of not going back to work is the fact that I'd need you to help me look for more specialist childcare"
    (Non-participating parent)

8.1.3   Undertaking, or looking for, education and training

There were parents who were already undertaking educational or training courses, and others said that they were looking for courses.

Those who were in education or training at the time the Pilots were offered to them had already got the childcare, if they needed it, so did not need help from the Pilots. Those who said they were thinking about going into education or training felt that they wanted to make arrangements for their courses before looking for childcare if they had younger children. Parents of school aged children could fit education and training around the school day/year, as the courses took place during school hours.

The undertaking of education or training was seen as preparation for work, with courses currently being attended by parents including:

- Vocational (for example IT, Administration and Beauty Therapy)

- Skills related (for example, Maths and English)

- Higher qualifications (degree courses)

8.1.4 Waiting until children were older

There were parents who were waiting to return to work when their children were older. Parents of younger children often saw their child going to school as the time when they would return to work, whilst parents of older children felt that their child needed to have some degree of independence before they could return to work.

"Now my son's getting older and he can sort of look after himself a bit more. Because when he was younger it was sort of just me and him, taking and fetching him from school"
> (Non-participating parent)

Some parents were using the time until their child was older to gain qualifications to move towards work readiness, and improve their confidence (see section 8.1.3).

8.2 Non-participating parents' experiences of, and views about, childcare

Generally, non-participating parents had used childcare in the past. Those who had not used any form of childcare said that they preferred to take care of their children themselves, and were mistrustful of formal childcare. The cost of childcare was also cited as a reason for not having used it.

Amongst those who had used childcare, both formal and informal types had been used, including childminders, crèches, nurseries, after school clubs and family and friends. Parents described both good and bad experiences of using childcare.

8.2.1 Positive experiences

- Some parents had used childminders who were very good with their children, and had formed a strong bond with them.
"I mean, she takes him out and she, but he talks about her all the time, when he doesn't see her for a few weeks, he does ask for her, so I suppose she made a good impression"
> (Non-participating parent)

- Nurseries were seen as beneficial for children, for example helping them to socialise with other children and most children were reported to enjoy their time there.

8.2.2 Negative experiences

- Some childminders were seen as inflexible over timings and payment.

"The way she approached me was all about money; when is the payment gonna come? Who is gonna pay this and who is gonna pay that?"

(Non-participating parent)

- Some parents thought that childcare providers were not as attentive to their children as they would have wanted.
- Parents sometimes found the additional time needed for travelling to and from childcare provision too tiring and difficult to manage.
- Some children did not enjoy being left in childcare, and parents found it difficult to justify sending them.

"I didn't want to be leaving him with other people, it was a personal thing. I didn't want him to feel as though mummy wasn't around, mummy was off working and everything"

(Non-participating parent)

- High costs and difficulties with availability were cited as being problematic.

8.2.3 Preference for informal childcare

Some parents expressed preferences for informal childcare. The benefits were perceived to be:

- Family and friends could be trusted to look after children 'properly' (that is, as the parents wished), because they would know how the parents brought up their children
- Children already knew family and friends, so there would be no 'settling down' issues, and children would be happy
- Family and friends would go out of their way to ensure that children were well looked after and their needs attended to
- Informal childcare was free, or very much cheaper than formal childcare, for some parents. This was an important factor for parents who felt that they would not be able to afford formal childcare.

8.3 Non-participating parents' views about being offered participation in the Pilots, and why they did not take up the offer

Generally non-participating parents had been told about the Pilots at Jobcentres whilst some had been at outreach events, such as open days and 'back to work' events where they had been approached by Pilot staff.

There were parents who actively declined participation in the Pilots and others who might have been interested in participating if they had been given more information – particularly those who had been promised a call back or information in the post, but who had not received anything.

8.3.1 Views of those who actively declined participation

Two main reasons were given by those who actively declined participation in the Pilots.

8.3.1.1 Not work ready

There were parents who talked about not having qualifications, not having worked for a long time and not wanting to leave their children as reasons for not looking for work at the time of the Pilots. For the purposes of this research these parents were classified as "not being work ready".

Parents felt that there was little point in looking at childcare options if they were not going to be in a position to use childcare.

Parents who were not work ready were not classifying childcare as a barrier to working. Rather, job readiness and wanting to stay at home with their children were the major factors.

For those not wanting to leave their children (see section 8.1.4 above), they gave similar reasons as those who participated in the pilot but felt they did not wish to return to work at the moment (see section 7.6). This attitude was mostly found amongst parents with children under school age. There was a common view from this sub-group that they wished to wait until their children were older before looking for work. For these parents, their views hindered the prospect of returning to work.

8.3.1.2 Already had childcare in place

These parents had made their own childcare arrangements, either because they were working or because they were in education or training. They did not need help with childcare at the time of the Pilots and did not see the need to investigate alternatives.

8.3.2 Views of those who might have been interested in the Pilots

Some parents would have been interested in the Pilots, but had not had enough information for them to make a decision. For these people, the following issues arose:

- Being promised information would be sent to them, but it had not arrived

- Receiving information but no follow-up , for example, with telephone contact

- Misunderstanding the nature of the Pilots, or being unclear about what would be expected of them if they took part. For example, thinking that they would be forced to go to work if they took part in the Pilots, regardless of whether they were ready:

For these parents there appears to have been missed opportunities to engage them with the Pilots.

8.4 Elements which might have made the Pilots more attractive to non-participating parents

Non-participating parents identified several things which might have made the Pilots more interesting to them:

- Better publicity, so that people could have been made more generally aware that help was available with childcare

"And that might be a lot of the time what's holding people back, saying oh I can't get a job, I can't leave my children, you know, I've heard it so many times, I can't go to work until they are at school, but if you can, its just that you need, you know people need more of the help"

(Non-participating parent)

- When staff said information would be sent it should have been followed through

- Follow up contact after information received – so that parents could have asked questions and cleared up queries

- More specialised information for parents of children with special needs

- Appointment times could have been more flexible, to fit the needs of parents of young children, for example, some parents reported being given appointments without consultation on what times would suit them, and they found they could not keep them.

"She gave me an appointment, two appointments, to go to the job centre to meet up with someone, talk about benefit. And then I didn't [go] … because the day she booked the appointment I had other things to do in school"

(Non-participating parent)

8.5   Changes in circumstances since being offered participation

There were parents who said that their circumstances had changed since they were offered participation and they would soon be looking for childcare and jobs. Usually the changes in circumstances were either that their (youngest) child had started school, or that they felt the need to work for financial reasons now, but had not in the past.

Some of these parents said that they would hope to be contacting Childcare Advisors in the near future to enquire about participation on the Pilots as they did not realise that the Pilots were time-limited.

Summary

This chapter discussed the reasons why parents did not participate in the Pilots.

There was generally no antipathy amongst these parents towards the idea of returning to work, and, indeed, some were already working, seeking work or undertaking training to enhance their chances of finding work. Amongst this group, as amongst the participating parents, there were those whose children were under school age who expressed a preference for waiting until their children were older before returning to work.

It was common amongst the non-participating parents to have used formal childcare in the past, and there was generally no antipathy to the thought of using it in the future, although some parents had had negative experiences of formal childcare, and some expressed a preference for using informal childcare.

There were two main reasons for declining participation in the Pilots:

- Not being work ready, and therefore feeling that there was little point in looking into childcare options

- Already having childcare in place

Non-participating parents identified several things which might have made the Pilots more appealing to them: more publicity; having information sent to them when it had been promised by staff; follow up contact after information was received, so that they could ask questions; specialised information for parents of children with special needs; appointment times flexible enough to fit with the needs of parents with young children.

9 Potential barriers to using formal childcare

This chapter will discuss potential barriers to using formal childcare identified by both participating and non-participating parents and the effect that participating in the Pilot had on parents' perceptions. Unless otherwise stated the barriers related to parents of children of all ages and to both CTP and ESCP.

Various potential barriers were identified by parents:

- The cost of formal childcare

- Being able to find information about childcare in local areas

- Lack of availability of childcare

- Worries about security and safety in childcare settings

- Worries about child not settling in formal childcare

- Wanting to stay at home with children

Each of these is examined below.

9.1 The cost of formal childcare

There are two elements to the cost of formal childcare: the deposit required by childcare providers and the ongoing costs on a weekly basis. Both participating and non-participating parents cited the expense of using formal childcare as a barrier.

"It is very expensive - I would use [Childcare] more often but it is quite expensive"
(Participating parent)

Participating parents had not all realised that there was help with the costs of childcare, and the information they had received during the Pilots had made it easier for them to see how they could afford it. However, some parents found that, even with help, childcare would take a large proportion of their income.

There were also parents who felt that they did not want to work the number of hours required to qualify for help with childcare costs[35].

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[35] See footnote 21 – Working Tax Credit (including the childcare element) requires 16 hours of work for those with dependent children.

Some Pilot areas effectively arranged for parents to have their first week's childcare for free by using the Taster for parents who had found work. This helped to offset the initial cost.

There were non-participating parents who said that because Tax Credits are paid in arrears, but childcare costs have to be paid in advance, they could not afford to bridge the gap and so could not consider formal childcare.

9.2 Finding information about childcare

Some parents had successfully found information on childcare in their area, and had arranged to visit childcare providers on their own. For these parents the main advantage of the Pilots was having free childcare via the Tasters. However, there were also parents who had not known how to find out about childcare, and who felt that the information provided, and the relationship with the childcare advisor had been very advantageous for them. Further, these parents felt that they now knew how to access information, should they need it in the future.

Accompanied visits were also beneficial, as not all parents felt confident enough to assess childcare provision on their own. Even some parents who felt more confident were glad to have someone with them to talk to about the childcare provider they were visiting.

9.3 Lack of availability of childcare

Lack of availability of childcare fell into four categories

9.3.1 Lack of places

In some areas parents perceived that childcare places were difficult to find. This perception was based either on trying, and failing, to find childcare in the past, or being told by friends that they had not been able to find provision.

CTP Childcare Chats were useful for showing parents where childcare was available, and ESCP created some childcare places to boost availability in areas where it was lacking.

However, there were parents in some areas who were disappointed not to be able to find the childcare they needed, particularly if they had been to visit childcare providers, and/or had Tasters with them, but then found that the provider did not have a place for their child.

More information about specific types of childcare places that were lacking is in sections 9.3.2, 9.3.3 and 9.3.4.

9.3.2 Not close enough to home or work

There were parents who had looked for childcare, but found that there were no available places near to their home, or potential workplace. Again, the Pilots were able to help some parents to find suitable childcare in a convenient location. There were, however, parents who still could not find suitably located childcare even after participating in the Pilots.

9.3.3 Not available at the right time

It was particularly difficult for parents to find childcare if they needed to work outside of 'normal' working hours. There was a particular lack of childcare during early mornings, in the evening, during the night and at weekends. There were parents who said that their only realistic chance of getting part time work was to work in jobs that fell into these 'anti social' hours. For example in one area there were many jobs advertised in call centres, but the majority were for evening and weekend work. Parents who had tried to find formal childcare at these times had either failed to find anyone willing to take their child, or found it very expensive.

There were similar concerns for parents who would be expected to work shifts if they returned to work, for example, nurses. These parents felt that arranging childcare to fit changing shift patterns, including night time shifts, would be very problematic. It should be noted here that stakeholders acknowledged that childcare was very difficult to find outside of 'normal' hours.

"Most nurseries unless you're really lucky close at 6 and if you're doing shift work that's a real problem... Now you know what its like, if you're driving, yes, you may leave work at 5 and you may only live 20 minutes away but if anything happens that's a real problem"
    (Non-participating parent)

There were no instances amongst the interviewees of parents who found childcare in these circumstances as a result of the Pilots.

9.3.4 Lack of childcare for children with special needs

There were also particular problems for parents of children with special needs. One respondent was helped to find care for her son via the Pilots, but others found that even with the help of a childcare advisor they could not find childcare providers who would take their children with special needs.

Again, stakeholders acknowledged the difficulty of finding childcare for children with special needs, saying that even where such provision existed, there were not enough places to meet requirements. When places did become available parents might have to travel relatively long distances to take up a place.

9.4 Worries about security and safety

Both participating and non-participating parents expressed concerns about security and safety in formal childcare. Some of these worries were sparked by seeing television programmes and media representations of formal childcare which were neither safe nor secure. Further, in some cases parents were worried about entrusting their child to 'strangers'.

"It is just me finding the right childcare and just finding somewhere where I feel comfortable and know that my kids are safe really, that's a big issue for me"
   (Participating parent)

Parents who participated in the Pilots felt reassured by visiting and trying out formal childcare, and by their discussions with childcare advisors during the Childcare Chats.

9.5 Worries about their child not settling into formal childcare

Participating and non-participating parents worried that their children would not be happy, and would not settle if left in formal childcare settings.

Generally, parents who participated in the Tasters found that their children enjoyed the sessions, and changed their view about formal childcare.

9.6 Worries about the quality of formal childcare

There were parents, both participating and non-participating, who had worries about the quality of formal childcare. Worries were most commonly about how their children would be occupied during their time in formal childcare. Such worries came from a number of sources, including media coverage of formal childcare as 'baby farms',

where small children were left in playpens or cots with no stimulation, and from hearing about bad childcare settings from friends and family.

The parents who participated in the Pilots generally had their fears allayed. Childcare Chats gave parents the opportunity to discuss their concerns; Visits to childcare settings allowed them to see children and childcare workers in the setting they might use for their child; and Tasters meant their child could experience childcare, and parents could assess for themselves whether their child had been occupied and happy.

9.7   Wanting to stay at home and look after their child

Some parents wanted to stay at home and be with their children until they reached school age, or beyond. For these parents there was sometimes a sense of conflict between the need, or desire, to work and their preference for being at home with their children.

"Its like as a parent you're constantly thinking about your children's welfare, you're constantly putting your children - always worrying about them – first. So suddenly you get a job and its perhaps a bit of guilt, I don't know, that you're leaving them a little bit"
    (Participating parent)

Whilst some people who held this view participated in the Pilots, their sense of conflict was not necessarily resolved, and, where other factors came into play, such as not working enough hours to qualify for help with childcare payments or lack of childcare during the hours they needed, they gave up on the idea of working for the present. These parents, however, did not necessarily give up on the idea of using formal childcare altogether, but they did not want to use it until their child was older.

Summary

This chapter discussed the potential barriers to using formal childcare identified by both participating and non-participating parents, and the effect that participating in the Pilot had on parents' perceptions.

Seven potential barriers were identified by parents: the cost of formal childcare; being unable to find information about childcare in local areas; lack of availability of childcare because of lack of places, it not being close to home or work, not being available at the right times or not being available for children with special needs; worries about security and safety in childcare settings, usually as a result of seeing reports in the media;

worries about children not settling into formal childcare; worries about the quality of formal childcare; and wanting to stay at home with children.

The Pilots were particularly beneficial in helping parents to overcome worries about safety and security, about children not settling into formal childcare and about the quality of formal childcare, and in giving parents information about the childcare in their local area.

10   Conclusions

This chapter brings together the views of stakeholders and parents, and assesses whether the Pilots met their aims and objectives.

10.1   The aim of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot

The stated aim of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) was that it should provide enough affordable formal childcare for lone parents, particularly those on Income Support, who had school aged children, to enable them to enter employment. The underlying objective was to develop childcare provision.

From the qualitative evidence of parents and stakeholders it is difficult to assess whether the ESCP element of the Pilots met the overall aim, as there is no direct evidence that involvement with ESCP led to parents moving into work. This question may be better addressed in the quantitative work using administrative data[36]. However, evidence shows the subsidiary goal of developing childcare was partially addressed. Some additional childcare developed took the form of breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday provision, which was mostly set up with primary schools for children aged 5 to 11. Extended Schools usually facilitated this additional childcare. However a number of obstacles were faced that meant not all schools participated in ESCP, including limited resources, space and facilities or the headteachers feeling that this was not an appropriate development. On-site limitations were overcome in some cases with linkages to childcare provision in the local community where the interest in ESCP prevailed. Information about the LA childcare provision was circulated in schools where ESCP did not eventuate. All of these actions helped to improve local childcare services.

Scoping work done by stakeholders in some areas showed that there were unfilled childcare vacancies in their areas. Further, there was a generally held view that some parents needed support to move into work. These two issues led to some areas using ESCP funding to do outreach work with parents. The outreach work was designed to

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[36] The pilot's effects are being evaluated together with In Work Credit on benefit exit and work entry, with a forthcoming report published by DWP. The first report is now published as Brewer et al. (2007), and further reports are forthcoming in 2008 and 2009. Unfortunately, this analysis does not provide separate work entry or benefit exit impacts for ESCP or CTP, only the combined impacts of the various lone parent Pilots that were operating within each district.

support parents in thinking about moving into work, which was viewed as a long term goal by stakeholders.

Most areas reported that they examined the supply of childcare at the outset, and some found vacancies existed. However, parents still reported that available childcare did not match their needs. This inconsistency is reconcilable if what stakeholders report as an unfilled vacancy is not perceived as a vacancy by the parent as it is not a vacancy of the type and with the characteristics required by the parent. This suggests that unfilled vacancies are not generic and that further assessments of provision of childcare needs to take account of these characteristics, including whether places are available at the times to match parent's work commitments and reasonable travel requirements. For example, availability in the evenings and at weekends, and dispersed convenient localities near parents' homes, or potential workplaces (this is because the travel adds time and cost to the childcare due to the journey to take and collect children). As the concept of Extended Schools is intended for the period 8 until 6, it is unclear that ESCP was well placed to address availability for the evenings and weekends, however the neighbourhood schools in which Extended Schools operate are usually quite conveniently located and so could help meet this aspect.

Parents liked the fact that the childcare available in Extended Schools meant that their children were looked after in a safe environment, and did not have to be picked up by a childminder, or make their own way to other types of childcare provision. As a result, the concept of ESCP was successfully accepted.

In terms of affordability, both stakeholders and parents expressed the view that childcare available in Extended Schools was more affordable than most other types of formal childcare, however there were still parents amongst the groups targeted by the programme (including those on Income Support) who found the cost prohibitive. This limitation hindered the success of the Pilots in this respect. Tax Credits were relied upon to meet affordability issues of childcare, but it appears there remain issues with regard to how well these work to address the childcare costs faced in practice. This aspect is further discussed in sections 7.6, 8.2.2 and section 9.1.

10.2 Childcare Taster Pilot objectives

Overall, the Pilots successfully helped consolidate the childcare information and services within the districts, helping to broaden links between key stakeholders and improve information services to parents. Stakeholders operating Childcare Taster Pilots were given four objectives against which progress can be assessed:

- To raise parents' awareness of the quality of formal childcare

- To address parents' concerns regarding using formal childcare, by providing information and giving a short experience of what such childcare would be like

- To help parents make choices about suitable childcare through clarifying the types available in the area, and the issues to be considered

- To help parents feel more comfortable with the thought of leaving their child(ren) with childcare providers and, where desired, to provide an opportunity for them to leave their child(ren) in the care of a provider for a short time.

10.2.1 Raising parents' awareness of the quality of formal childcare

There were parents who had used formal childcare in the past, or who had no particular qualms about using formal childcare, and these were parents who felt the Pilot objectives were not relevant to them. They had participated in the Pilots to find out about childcare in their area, and, usually, to benefit from the free childcare offered in the Childcare Tasters.

Some parents who chose not to participate were also in the position of having no concerns about the quality of formal childcare, and their reasons for not participating did not involve concerns about the quality of formal childcare.

Other parents, both among those who participated in the Pilots, and those who chose not to, did have concerns regarding the quality of formal childcare, as discussed at section 9.6. Often these worries were caused by reading newspaper reports about childcare, seeing television programmes or talking to others. For these parents, worries often centred on how their children would be cared for in formal childcare, and what sort of activities would be available for them.

It is clear from the interviews with participating parents that worries about the quality of formal childcare were largely overcome by taking part in the Pilots. The non-participating parents who had worries about the quality of formal childcare still saw this as a barrier to using it. It appears, therefore, that the participation in the Pilots provision was successful in raising awareness of the quality of formal childcare, for those who took part.

10.2.2 Addressing parents' concerns

Parents who had concerns about formal childcare quality found the information they received during Childcare Chats to be beneficial, and the experience of trying out

childcare helped some to overcome worries they had. For this group of parents concerns were addressed, for example, about how nurseries occupied children's time (see section 9.6).

It was uncommon for parents to try out more than one sort of provision using Tasters, even if they had been unsure about what sort of provision they would prefer. Multiple trials had been part of the initial design for Tasters, but there is not clear evidence that trying other sorts of provision was desired or would be beneficial for these parents.

There were parents who used the Tasters as free childcare either whilst job hunting, or, effectively, to act as a deposit or to tide them over until their Tax Credits began to be paid. These parents had usually assessed in advance the type of childcare they needed, and in some cases the actual provider they wished to use. For this group the Pilots did not address concerns, because they did not have any. Instead, the Pilots provided services that assisted more directly towards the aim of enabling these parents to enter employment.

It appears, therefore that there was some success in addressing parents' concerns, for those parents who had them. Furthermore, for parents who had advanced further along the spectrum of preparation for working with childcare, the Tasters gave a very useful assistance in facilitating the move to work.

10.2.3 Helping parents to make choices about childcare

The Childcare Advisors discussed the potential childcare needs with parents, and how these might be addressed, including what types of childcare provision was available in their area. There were parents for whom this information was sufficient to make an informed choice about the type of childcare they would prefer. As mentioned above, there were parents who already knew what sort of childcare they would like, and did not need help to make choices.

For parents who were less sure after the Chats about what sort of provision they would prefer, the Accompanied Visits allowed one or more visits to childcare providers. The parents who took this route found the Visits to be useful, and were keen to have a Taster with providers they experienced on Visits. This was not always possible, as some childcare providers were running at capacity, and could not take a child for a Taster, which was a disappointment to parents.

The Childcare Chats were successful in identifying issues of importance for parents, and the types of childcare available in their area. Accompanied Visits and Childcare Tasters helped parents to identify childcare they might be willing to use. The evidence

suggests that this objective was met with parents who were not already clear about what sort of childcare provision they would prefer.

10.2.4 Helping parents feel more comfortable about using formal childcare

As mentioned above, for parents who had worries about using formal childcare, the chance to try out provision in Tasters alleviated many of their concerns. From this perspective the Tasters were particularly successful for parents who had worried about whether their child would settle into formal childcare, and for those who had concerns about how children would be occupied during their stay.

10.3 The overall aim of the Pilots

The overall aim of the Pilots was to explore the assertion that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support.

Analysis of the interviews with parents and stakeholders suggests that there is no doubt that childcare is a barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support, however, the availability of childcare is just one aspect, and there are other, childcare and non-childcare related barriers potentially of equal or prime importance.

10.3.1 Childcare

Childcare remained a major barrier, despite the Pilots.

In some areas there was considered to be sufficient provision of childcare, as there were vacancies, however it was not always available at the right times for parents. For example, call centre work tended to be offered part time in the evenings and at weekends, when childcare provision was particularly lacking.

In other areas there was a lack of childcare near parents' homes, or potential workplaces, so using the childcare which was available would have involved an impractical journey to take and collect – adding both time and cost.

As a result, the variety of childcare solutions available locally may need to be more carefully addressed.

One of the greatest barriers to using childcare was the cost, both in terms of the deposits required and the ongoing weekly cost of using the provision. One of the issues raised was that childcare for children under school age was particularly expensive, as it was needed for whole days, not just pre and post school. There were parents who would have liked to have worked, but who felt that they could not afford

childcare, even with help. As Working Tax Credits (through the Childcare Tax element) were the policies that were thought to intervene here, it seems that some aspects of their design or delivery are not reaching a key target group. In Working Tax Credits, the amount you receive depends on various requirements, including your annual income. Aspects that parents referred to in regard to childcare costs included the maximum limits on the childcare element of WTC[37], and the minimum number of hours of work required for eligibility (16 hours). If the cost issue could be surmounted the Pilots helped parents to overcome other concerns about formal childcare, and they were not averse to using it in the future, if it were affordable.

10.3.2   Other restraints on working

There were barriers other than childcare. There were parents who felt they were not ready to work, either because they lacked confidence or because they needed training. For parents in this position who took part in the Pilots there was a view that they were gathering information for when they would be ready to start looking for a job. Parents in this position who did not participate said that they could not see the point, as they were not thinking about childcare.

One view expressed by parents of younger children was that they did not want to work until their children were at school, when childcare would be before and after the school day.

These other barriers to work can supersede the childcare barrier, as they need to be addressed before the parents will consider the available childcare or participation in services such as those in the Pilots. Collectively, these parents were not prepared to work yet. As such, the obstacles to work for them could not be addressed with the childcare provisions set up in the Pilots. However, the outreach work which was added

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[37] The Childcare costs element of working tax credit can be up to a maximum of 80p for every £1 paid out in childcare costs. This is up to a limit of £175.00 in costs per week for one child and £300.00 for two or more children. Any costs in excess of these amounts are not used in the calculation. This means the most you can receive for the childcare element is £140.00 (£175 at 80p in the £1) if you have one child, or £240.00 (£300 at 80p in the £1) if you have two or more children. Example: For childcare costs for one child of £200.00 per week, the maximum amount that can be used in the calculation is £175.00. The £25 paid in excess of this amount is ignored. The childcare element payable is calculated as follows: 175 x 80p = £140.00.

to ESCP work in some areas might have provided some assistance for these types of impediments.

Overall, the evidence suggests that policy solutions need to address the dual aspect of these obstacles by continuing to improve childcare supply accessibility and affordability but at the same time also addressing the continuing need to prepare parents to work.

10.4   Implications for the Pilots and further developments

This section further explores the implications of the findings for the Pilots and future programme developments. Parents' suggestions for changes to the Pilots are found in section 7.6, and stakeholders' suggestions are found at section 6.

The Pilots showed evidence that these community based Pilots which are reliant on the recruitment of additional staff to work on the pilot, could take longer to get underway, a large part of which was due to the time taken to recruit staff to begin the pilot activities. Engaging a broad variety of stakeholders can also be time-consuming. In addition, temporary staff vacancies for short term Pilots were hard to fill, to the extent that in one area the ESCP did not run, despite available funding, due to failure to recruit. Stakeholders thought the failure to recruit was related to the temporary nature of the job, which fared poorly against other permanent positions available. In a nationwide programme, this problem of short term/temporary positions might be less problematic, however consideration of the slow start-up related to recruitment would still be needed.

In regard to cross-agency working, the Pilots showed general success. There were some difficulties, for example where the DCSF was perceived to not supply information to the Pilots. One difficulty for ESCP was that the headteachers of schools were not always positive and receptive about the Pilots. However, in delivering the Pilots, the field agencies worked well together, and the stakeholders felt the interagency working generated by the Pilots was a major benefit derived from the Pilots. In particular, the contacts made between individuals in different organisations was seen to be beneficial.

Parents found the CTP did not generally resolve practical issues related to childcare cost (affordability), availability and transport (sections 9.1 and 9.3). This suggests that the scope Pilots was insufficient to address these. This is now further explored in the following discussion.

The Pilots set out to ensure 'a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible formal childcare'. To do this, LAs supported initiatives with the Jobcentres, Children's Information Service, and childcare providers, and engaged with schools to integrate childcare with their other services, such as Extended Schools, where possible. A

'mapping' of local childcare services and vacancies was undertaken by some areas (but not all), however it is not clear that when performed, these mappings were successful in reflecting vacancies satisfactorily, since parents reported that vacancies of the type they required were not always available[38]. However, it seems that the Pilot needed to be more specific about how many vacancies of what varieties and types of childcare was sufficient, and how affordable and accessible. This might be addressed at the outset, by outlining as part of the Pilot, a systematic approach to identifying the local childcare supply rigorously, where it is specified that aspects in terms of hours of availability, cost and location together with available transport (perhaps defining a local vicinity in terms of travel distance) need to be addressed, with regard to vacancies. By setting a desirable range to the hours, with a maximum cost and location/travel distance then local assessment of needs is more straightforward. However, while it is straightforward to address this aspect of reviewing vacancy supply, it would be valuable to gain some local insight into parents' unmet demand for these aspects of childcare, as they might not all be relevant to all areas at all times. Otherwise, vacancies might exist for the reason that they do not address parents' needs. It also needs to be clearly stated for the benefit of stakeholders that the Pilots seek to address these aspects of childcare, so that stakeholders are sufficiently aware of the importance of the types of vacancies available.

However, it should also be noted that the main means of practically addressing childcare with ESCP was through childcare being added to the Extended Schools, which is usually based around the 8-6 offer. This allows for standard working hours only and cannot address the 'anti-social' hours (evening, night, early morning, weekend see section 9.3.3) which work might be part time and more suitable for lone parents and perhaps offer higher rates. More work needs to be done to identify how better to increase provision of childcare for anti-social hours, since some research indicates providers themselves can be reluctant to provide this for various reasons[39].

It should be pointed out that the original aim of the pilot was childcare for children aged 5-14 (or 16 if special needs), but primary school age (5-11) was focused on by the stakeholders. This narrowing of the aim might be realistic for the Pilot timeframe, but indicates that more resources and time might be needed to achieve the wider age

[38] It was not possible to assess the mapping exercises performed as these were not part of evidence gathered for research.

[39] See Campbell-Barr (2006) and Statham and Mooney, (2003).

range. However, while many parents might have fewer childcare requirements for children beyond primary school age this might be less true for lone parents in work. This might be assisted by the '8-6' offer via Extended Schools where parents work standard hours.

Stakeholders also perceived affordability to be the main childcare problem for parents, especially the deposits to secure vacancies (section 3.2). However, the affordability of the childcare could not be easily addressed by the scope of Pilots, since the means of addressing this was assumed to be the Working Tax Credit (WTC) Childcare element[40]. The WTC Childcare element can pay up to 80 per cent of the childcare costs but only up to a maximum cost limit, and WTC is subject to other requirements such as income and hours. Yet the upfront deposit, sometimes for a month's care, is not dealt with by WTC as the tax credits take some time to be delivered and deposits and fees must be paid by the parent in the interim, when the provider requires the money. Moreover, pay

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[40] The design documents for the Pilots state that WTC was seen to be the main solution for childcare costs. Another pilot, which was made available in some of the same areas as the ESCP and CTP Pilots, was the In Work Credit pilot. This might also have addressed affordability as it supplied additional funds to those eligible participants who entered work. However, eligibility was limited to a specific subgroup. The In Work Credit pilot (IWC) consists of a payment to lone parents who enter work of at least 16 hours per week, of £40 per week, for up to 12 months. To be eligible, lone parents must have been in receipt of benefits (IS or JSA) for 12 months or more. Payments stop if the individual leaves work for more than five weeks. For further information on IWC, see Brewer et al. (2007) and Ray et al. (2007). The combined Pilots, of which IWC was one element, were found in formal quantitative analysis in Brewer et al. (2007) to have small, positive impacts on the number of lone parents in work and no longer receiving out-of-work benefits. These impacts were only found to be robust for those already claiming benefits, new claimants were not found to have a robustly measurable impact. Ray et al. (2007) conducted qualitative analysis for IWC and found that lone parents felt that IWC alone had little impact on their work-related decisions. Although, the vast majority who received IWC felt that it had made a difference to their financial wellbeing whilst in work. Both staff and lone parents thought that IWC was a useful addition to the financial package which eased lone parents' transition from benefits into work. However, while staff saw it as a powerful incentive, lone parents, by and large, did not. This seems to be due to the delivery of information on IWC not occurring during the stages prior to work, the majority of participants only found out about IWC when they were already in work or committed to finding work, (therefore it is difficult to judge its potential incentive effect).

from starting work usually arrives in arrears, so unless parents have money available (and this could be a substantial sum), this aspect of affordability remains a barrier. However, other aspects of the ongoing costs of formal childcare also seemed to be unaffordable for many parents, as the proportion of income lost to care costs or the number of hours worked were found to be too high (section 9.1, note that WTC requires at least 16 hours of work per week for lone parents). These might be addressed within WTC by increasing the proportion of childcare costs covered to 100 per cent and removing the maximum limit on costs. Alternatively, and more simply, increasing the hours of early years education free entitlement to 20 hours per week and to cover a wider range of children's ages, from 1 year onwards for example, might help address the costs together with the hours required. This might also address the issue providers had with ensuring payment from parents participating in childcare with Pilot referrals (section 5.6). This could be a fruitful area for further research.

There was evidence that the Pilots led to some changed attitudes about returning to work, increasing work or going into training (section 7.6). A chief success of the Pilots for participants was that the Childcare Chats, Accompanied Visits and Tasters had generally been found informative and resolved issues about leaving children in formal childcare and also the availability of WTC childcare element (Section 7.3 and 7.5). Information given in outreach in ESCP may also have contributed to this. Some parents felt this helped them *think about* returning to work (section 7.5). Generally, parents found it helped them *think about* returning to work because they knew more about available childcare, and WTC, and felt more positive about leaving children in formal childcare (section 7.6). However some felt they were not ready to work or *think about* returning to work, even after Pilot participation.

Some parents also found that not feeling ready to work affected their choices about Pilot participation. Overall, the content of the Pilots was not generally seen as a reason for deciding not to participate. Rather, active decision-making assessed the relevance of the Pilot to the parent against their personal preferences and circumstances. With regard to the Pilots, this may indicate that encouraging more Pilot participation from this group would be difficult. For example, parents who did not want to work at that time or in the near future, found the Childcare Chats were not a positive experience (section 7.3.1). For these parents, their preferences and circumstances were not yet oriented to work, and these would need to be addressed first. Under ESCP, outreach work was developed (section 3.2) and this is likely to be the main alternative within the Pilots that could be expanded to addressing the preferences and orientation to work and use of formal childcare. This outreach work is also engaged in by Jobcentre staff under programs such as New Deal for Lone Parents, and so there might appear to be some overlap but it may be that they reach separate groups that could not be easily reached

by Jobcentre programs. Note however, that most parents did not recognise they had participated in outreach work, nor ESCP (section 7.3.4). This lack of awareness would be linked to the absence of an explicit invitation to participate in this named Pilot, but also to the low profile of the programme, and while it makes evaluating this aspect difficult, it is not clear that it would need to be addressed unless it affected the delivery of the programme.

The attractiveness of the Pilots to parents could be addressed with more or better targeted publicity, specialised information for those with children with special needs, and flexible appointment times to fit the needs of young children (section 8.3.3). However, there were some parents who felt that they would have been interested in the Pilots, but the provided information and follow-up was insufficient (section 8.3.2). To address engagement with this group requires more follow-up, where promised additional information is sent out and telephone contact is made to establish if information needs have been met, and any misunderstandings clarified. Given that outreach was included in many ESCP Pilots, it is possible that these issues might have arisen more where this was not the case.

Summary

The Pilots met their aims and objectives with varying degrees of success.

ESCP aimed to provide enough affordable formal childcare for lone parents with school aged children, particularly those on Income Support, to enable them to enter employment. Stakeholders investigated the supply of childcare in their areas at the outset of the Pilots, and some found that vacancies existed. Where parents had used the childcare available from the ESCP elements of the Pilots, it was well liked by parents, who felt it was more affordable and convenient than other types of formal childcare. However, there were some parents who still found the cost of childcare provided through ESCP prohibitive, and this limitation somewhat hindered the success of the Pilots.

CTP had four broad aims:

- To raise parents' awareness of the quality of formal childcare

  CTP was largely successful in this respect, with parents' worries about formal childcare usually being ameliorated as a result of their participation.

- Addressing parents' concerns

It appears that there was some success in addressing parents' concerns, for those parents who had them. For parents who were ready to work the Tasters gave useful assistance in facilitating the move into work, for example by providing a week's free childcare to help them prepare for work or go for interviews.

- Helping parents to make choices about childcare

Childcare Chats were successful in identifying issues of importance for parents, and identifying the types of childcare in their area. Accompanied Visits and Tasters helped parents to identify childcare they might be willing to use. The evidence suggests that this aim was met with parents who were not already clear about the sort of childcare provision they would prefer.

- Helping parents feel more comfortable about using formal childcare

For those parents who had worries about formal childcare the chance to try out provision in Tasters helped to alleviate many of their concerns. CTP was particularly successful for parents who had worried about whether their child would settle into formal childcare, or who had had concerns about how their children would be occupied during the day.

The overall aim of the Pilots was to explore the assertion that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support. Whilst the evaluation suggests that there can be little doubt that childcare is a barrier to work for such parents, that it is only one aspect, and that other barriers (particularly non-childcare related) which are potentially of equal or prime importance.

The cost of childcare was the greatest childcare related barrier remaining for parents, others being lack of childcare close to home or work, and lack of childcare for parents who worked outside of 'normal' hours.

Other barriers for parents related to not being work ready, either because they lacked confidence or because they needed training. There were also parents, particularly those with children under the age of five, who wished to remain at home with their children until they went to school. These types of barriers could supersede the childcare related barriers, as they had to be addressed before parents were ready to consider the available childcare.

Overall, the evidence suggests that policy solutions need to address the dual aspects of these obstacles by continuing to improve childcare supply, accessibility and affordability, whilst at the same time also addressing the continuing need to prepare parents for work.

11   Appendix 1: Research Design

As discussed in section 2.4, the research was designed to run in waves to capture information from stakeholders about the different phases of the Pilots as they progressed. A wholly qualitative design was used, allowing the views and experiences of both stakeholders and parents to be explored. A mixture of telephone and face to face interviews were used: telephone interviews were utilised in both early and final interviews with stakeholders, when interviews were relatively short; face to face interviews were used for longer and potentially more complex interviews in the middle phases of the Pilots, to capture information when they had been running for some time. A total of 256 interviews were conducted with stakeholder across five phases of the evaluation. The table below shows the number of interviews in each phase.

Parents who had participated in the Pilots were interviewed in order to understand whether, and how, the Pilots had affected their views on using formal childcare and going back to work. Parents' experiences of participating in the Pilots were also explored.

Parents who had not participated in the Pilots, but who had been invited to take part were interviewed to explore their views on formal childcare and returning to work. Interviews also explored parents' reasons for non-participation to identify factors, in addition to childcare, which represent significant barriers to work.

A total of 96 parents were interviewed – 60 parents who had participated in the Pilots and 36 who had declined participation.

All interviews with parents were face to face.

The phases of the research were:

Phase	Details
Phase 1	Face to Face and telephone interviews with first wave LAs on initial implementation in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford. Between 12 and 14 interviews were carried out in each area (36 in total). The individuals interviewed depended on the arrangements in place in the LA.
Phase 2	Telephone interviews with stakeholders in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale. Between 2 and 4 interviews were carried out in each area (24 in total). The

Phase	Details
	individuals interviewed depended on the arrangements in place in the LA.
Phase 3	Face to Face and telephone interviews with stakeholders in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford.
	Between 12 and 14 interviews were carried out in each area (42 in total). As far as possible the same individuals interviewed in Phase 1 were re-interviewed.
Phase 4	Face to Face interviews with stakeholders in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale.
	Between 12 and 15 interviews were carried out in each area (112 in total). Where possible the same individuals interviewed in Phase 2 were re-interviewed, and the original interviewees suggested other stakeholders to include in the sample.
Phase 5	Telephone interviews with stakeholders in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford.
	Between 12 and 14 interviews were carried out in each area (42 in total). As far as possible the same individuals interviewed in Phase 3 were re-interviewed.
Phase 6	Face to Face interviews with participating and non-participating parents.
	60 Participating Parents and 36 Non-Participating Parents were interviewed (96 in total).

Stakeholders were interviewed in phases 1-5 of the research. As mentioned in the table above, wherever possible the same individuals were interviewed in each phase. Where this was not possible (usually due to changes of job), replacement interviews were undertaken with people carrying out the same, or a similar, role within the Pilots. The range of job titles of stakeholders taking part were:

Job Centre Plus   Childcare Partnership Manager

                                             District Manager

	Team Leader
	NDLP and NDP advisors
	NDLP and NDP managers
	Lone parent advisor
Local Authority	Strategic officer
	Lead officer
	Deputy project manager
	Manager of Extended Schools Pilot
	Out of School childcare manager
	Extended childcare project co-ordinator
	Childcare advisor
	Childcare broker
	Ofsted link officer/lead on childcare taster
	Development worker
	Development officer
Children's Information Service	CIS manager
	Marketing and CIS manager
	Children's information link manager
	Childcare advisor
Schools and Childcare Providers	Head teacher
	Deputy head teacher
	Co-ordinator of extended school service
	Area manager of childcare provider

Manager of childcare provider

After school club worker

Day nursery worker

Childminder

Parents were interviewed in Phase 6 of the research. Sample of participating parents was supplied by LAs from data they had collected at the time of the Pilots; only parents who had given their permission for their data to be passed to BMRB were contacted. Sample of non-participating parents was supplied by DWP. Both participating and non-participating parents received opt-out letters and only those who had not opted-out were contacted.

Quotas were set on the recruitment of both participating and non-participating parents to ensure the samples reflected the sampling frames as much as possible. For both participating and non-participating parents interviews were spread across all eleven areas running the Pilots.

For both participating and non-participating parents the quota headers were as follows, together with the reasons for including them:

- Males were prioritised. There were very few in the sample and it was deemed important that their views should be heard.

- People living with a partner. There were few people living with a partner in the sample, so a quota was set to ensure their views were heard.

- Age of youngest child. To explore, where possible, whether the age of youngest child is a factor in deciding to return to work. The quota headers were:

  o Under 1

  o 1-4

  o 5-10

  o 11+

- Work situation. This quota allowed some exploration of issues around job readiness. The main quota headers were:

  o In paid work

      o   Not in work

For participating parents a further quota was included:

- Pilot participation. To gather information on the pilot elements, including why some people did not participate in all the elements they were eligible for. The quota headers were:

      o   Chat only

      o   Chat and visit

      o   Chat and taster

      o   Chat, visit and taster

      o   Extended school and/or outreach

12 Appendix 2: Topics discussed in interviews

Topic guides are aides memoir, used by researchers to highlight the areas to be discussed in interviews. However, topic guides are not questionnaires, and as such topics are sometimes discussed in a different order, and some are given more emphasis by participants than others.

In all phases of the research either separate sections of a single topic guide or separate topic guides were used for stakeholders in Job Centres, Local Authorities and Schools / Childcare providers. Further, within each phase the topic guides varied to reflect stakeholders' roles and organisations. In the parents' phase, separate topic guides were used for participating and non-participating parents.

Throughout all interviews researchers distinguished feedback about extended schools childcare and the childcare taster Pilots.

The topic guides for all phases of the research contained prompts and reminders for researchers, making the topic guides relatively long (up to ten pages). Only the main headers for the topics discussed in each phase are given below.

12.1 Phase 1

- Background of the participant

- Initial summary of views of Pilots and involvement in them

- Planning and progress on the Pilots to this point

- Activity within their own organisation

- Relationships between their own organisation and other organisations

- Views on the impact and the future of the Pilots

- Lessons they have learned from their involvement so far

12.2 Phase 2

- Background of participant

- Initial summary of views of Pilots and involvement in them

- Understanding of aims of Pilots

- Progress of Pilots

    o Recruitment of necessary staff

    o Creation of new roles

- Structure Pilots are going to take in their area

- How funding has been spent so far

- Relationship / contact with other organisations involved in the Pilots

- Contact with parents

- Strategies for:

    o branding the Pilots

    o mapping gaps / needs in provision

    o exploring management of existing vacancies

    o planning for number of childcare places needed

- Guidance received from DWP / DCSF / National Tier JC+

- How Pilots are (or will) operate

    o Whether parents will be tracked through the process

    o Information being collected

- Views of impact of Pilots in their area

12.3 Phase 3

For all interviewees:

- Respondent's role – for those being re-interviewed, any changes / developments

- Progress in Pilots since last interview

- Working with other stakeholders – for those being re-interviewed, changes since last interview

- Exploration of issues raised in previous interviews

- Personal views of Pilots

- Impacts of Pilots in their area

- Their perceptions of barriers to use of childcare

- Lessons learnt so far from Pilots

- Plans for the future of the Pilots

For Job Centre and Local Authority staff:

- Marketing of Pilots to parents

- Any feedback they have received

- Views on childcare in their area

For Job Centre staff only:

- Use of Work Focused Interviews to introduce Pilots

- Recording the take-up of the Pilots

- Numbers of referrals / level of take-up

  o Views on take-up

For Local Authority staff only:

- Use of Childcare Chats

- Structure and strategy of the Pilots in their area

- Working with parents

For Schools and Childminders Only:

- Initial engagement with Pilots

- Why they chose to take part

- How they are delivering the Pilots

- Impact of Pilots on their organisation

- Take-up

    o Recording take-up

- Re. ESCP

    o Engaging parents

- Re. CTP

    o Allocation to parents

    o Delivery to parents

12.4 Phase 4

For all interviewees:

- Respondent's role – for those being re-interviewed, any changes / developments

- Progress in Pilots since last interview

- Working with other stakeholders – for those being re-interviewed, changes since last interview

- Exploration of issues raised in previous interviews

- Take-up of Pilots

    o Monitoring / recording take-up

- Views on take-up

- Personal views of Pilots

- Impacts of Pilots in their area

- Their perceptions of barriers to use of childcare

- Lessons learnt so far from Pilots

- Plans for the future of the Pilots

For Job Centre and Local Authority staff:

- Referring parents to Pilots

- Marketing / engaging parents

- Delivery of Pilots

For Local Authority staff:

- Structure and strategy of Pilots in their area – and any changes since last interview

- Working with parents – directly and via other stakeholders

- How different elements of CTP are working

- How ESCP is working in their area

For Schools and Childcare Providers:

- Delivery of Pilots

- Engaging parents

- Allocation and delivery of CTP to parents

12.5   Phase 5

The interviews in Phase 5 were mainly about reflecting on the Pilots. Topics covered were as follows.

For all interviewees:

- Respondent's role – for those being re-interviewed, any changes / developments

- Views of aims of pilot

- compare aims with reality

- development and delivery of Pilots

- Working with other organisations / stakeholders

- Linking with other initiatives or Pilots

- Working with parents

- Take-up

- Views of take-up

- Examples of good practice

- Difficulties encountered – solutions found

- Exploration of issues raised in previous interviews

- Views of Pilots

- Impacts of Pilots

- Barriers to use of childcare

- Barriers to taking up work for parents

- Parents' views

- Lessons learnt from Pilots

- With hindsight, they would have liked anything to be different about the Pilots

- Plans for the future when Pilots end

- Taking forward any elements of Pilot in future work

For LA staff:

- Structure and strategy of the Pilots in their area –

- Working with parents – directly and via other stakeholders

- CTP – how different elements are used and are working

- ESCP – how it is working in their area

For Schools and Childcare Providers:

- Why they decided to take part

- Delivery of Pilots

- Engaging parents

- Re: CTP

  o Allocation and delivery of CTP to parents

  o Any issues arising from involvement with CTP

12.6   Phase 6

Phase 6 involved interviews with parents. There were two topic guides – one for parents who had participated in the Pilots and one for parents who had declined participation in the Pilots.

12.6.1 Topic issues for participating parents:

- Current background of respondent

- Background of respondent at time of taking part

- Initial experience of childcare Pilots

- Experience of

  o Childcare chat

  o Visits

  o Tasters

  o Extended Schools / outreach

- For those who did not take part in any elements they were offered - reasons for not taking up offer / reasons why it did not happen

- Impact of Pilots in changing attitudes to / use of childcare

- Other changes in lives which have affected attitudes to childcare

- Impact of Pilots in changing attitudes / behaviour relating to work

- Suggestions for changes to Pilots

12.6.2 Topic issues for non-participating parents:

- Current background of respondent

- If not working – views on returning to work, including perceived barriers

- Views and experiences of childcare

- Background of respondent at time Pilot was offered

- Views of being offered participation in Pilot

- Current work and childcare situation

- Potential improvements to Pilots

13 Appendix 3: The analysis of qualitative data using *Matrix Mapping*

Material collected through qualitative methods is invariably unstructured and unwieldy. Much of it is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro-form (for example, accounts of experiences, inarticulate explanations, etc.). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set whilst retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

Qualitative analysis is essentially about detection and exploration of the data, making sense' of the data by looking for coherence and structure within the data. *Matrix Mapping* works from verbatim transcripts and involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes. The process begins with a **familiarisation stage** and would include a researcher's review of the audio tapes and/or transcripts. Based on the coverage of the topic guide, the researchers' experiences of conducting the fieldwork and their preliminary review of the data, a **thematic framework is constructed**. The analysis then proceeds by **summarising and synthesising the data** according to this thematic framework using a range of techniques such as cognitive mapping and data matrices. When all the data have been sifted according to the core themes the analyst begins to **map the data and identify features within the data:** defining concepts, mapping the range and nature of phenomenon, creating typologies, finding associations, and providing explanations.

The mapping process is similar for both individual interviews and group discussions. The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but it involves a process of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.

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