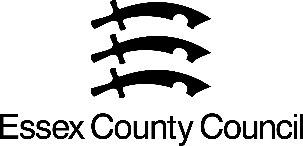
# Childcare in Essex – Parents’ views – detailed survey results

# To inform:

# Childcare Sufficiency Audit

# Early Years and Childcare Strategy

February 2021 

Contents

[Survey: Childcare in Essex - parents' views 4](#_Toc64235121)

[Introduction 4](#_Toc64235122)

[Key findings 5](#_Toc64235124)

[Survey results 7](#_Toc64235125)

[1. Welcome 7](#_Toc64235126)

[2. Before you start... 7](#_Toc64235127)

[3. About your family 9](#_Toc64235128)

[4. Your work status - couple 12](#_Toc64235129)

[5. Your work status - lone parent 13](#_Toc64235130)

[6. A bit more about you 14](#_Toc64235131)

[7. Childcare for your pre-school children 18](#_Toc64235132)

[8. Pre-school children: Formal childcare 22](#_Toc64235133)

[9. Pre-school children: Using more than one type of formal childcare 25](#_Toc64235134)

[10. Communication with your pre-school childcare setting 26](#_Toc64235135)

[12. Pre-school children: Not using any childcare 28](#_Toc64235136)

[13. Pre-school children: Informal childcare 29](#_Toc64235137)

[14. About your pre-school child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND) 31](#_Toc64235138)

[15. Receiving support for your pre-school child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND) 33](#_Toc64235139)

[16. Communication with childcare setting about additional needs or disabilities (SEND) 34](#_Toc64235140)

[17. Awareness of the Free Early Years Entitlement and Extended entitlement 35](#_Toc64235141)

[18. and 19. Accessing and the experience of the Free Early Years Entitlement and Extended entitlement 35](#_Toc64235142)

[20. Not accessing the Free Early Years Entitlement or Extended entitlement 38](#_Toc64235143)

[21. Awareness of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of pre-school children) 39](#_Toc64235144)

[22. Use of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of pre-school children) 39](#_Toc64235145)

[31. Awareness of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of school-aged children) 40](#_Toc64235146)

[32. Use of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of school-aged children) 40](#_Toc64235147)

[23. Childcare for your school aged children 43](#_Toc64235148)

[24. School aged children: Formal childcare 46](#_Toc64235149)

[25. School aged children: Using more than one type of formal childcare 48](#_Toc64235150)

[26. School aged children: Not using any childcare 49](#_Toc64235151)

[27. School aged children: Informal childcare 50](#_Toc64235152)

[28. About your school aged child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND) 52](#_Toc64235153)

[29. Receiving support for your school aged child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND) 54](#_Toc64235154)

[30. Communication with childcare setting about additional needs or disabilities (SEND) 55](#_Toc64235155)

[34. Childcare experience during Covid-19 lockdown (23 March 2020 – 29 May 2020) 57](#_Toc64235156)

[37. Attended childcare during Covid-19 lockdown 57](#_Toc64235157)

[36. Not attending childcare during Covid-19 lockdown 59](#_Toc64235158)

[38. Return to childcare after Covid-19 lockdown 60](#_Toc64235159)

[39. Your childcare needs following Covid-19 lockdown 61](#_Toc64235160)

[40. Changes in your childcare needs following Covid-19 62](#_Toc64235161)

[41. Getting ready for school 64](#_Toc64235162)

[42. Delayed start to school 65](#_Toc64235163)

[43. Children who have started school recently (2019 and 2020) 66](#_Toc64235164)

[46. Children starting school next year (2021) 70](#_Toc64235165)

[Parents’ information needs around getting ready for school 71](#_Toc64235166)

[44 and 45. Your views on school readiness resources 73](#_Toc64235167)

[47. Information, advice and guidance around child development and learning 75](#_Toc64235168)

[48. and 49. Awareness of and accessing the Essex Family Information Service 80](#_Toc64235169)

[50. and 51. Awareness of and Accessing the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Family Hubs) 83](#_Toc64235170)

[52. Knowing other parents 94](#_Toc64235171)

[53. Open ended comments 97](#_Toc64235172)

## Survey: Childcare in Essex - parents' views

### Introduction

# 

In November 2020, Research & Citizen Insight team conducted a survey entitled ‘Childcare in Essex – parents’ views’. This was aimed at parents of children aged 0 – 19 (25 if SEND) living in Essex using any form of childcare (formal or informal), including those not using any.

This survey was conducted to inform the development of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy and the Childcare Sufficiency Audit (providing a parental perspective to add to that of childcare settings).

The survey received 1,262 responses.

This report presents the detailed findings from the survey, question by question. This is to inform primarily the Childcare Sufficiency Audit, for which greater interrogation of the finidngs may be needed than to inform the development of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2021-2026.

The results tables were generated by the SmartSurvey tool used to conduct the survey. However, some additional commentary and analysis is provided in places, especially around open ended comments.

Please note that the survey included a large number of sections, which were either shown or not shown to individual respondents, based on their answers to specific mandatory questions. Therefore, **totals of respondents vary for different sections/questions**.

When reading through results tables, pay attention to the ‘answered’ boxes, which indicate the number of respondents to that particular question.

Additional outputs presenting the findings from this survey are:

* ‘Childcare in Essex – Parents’ views survey results to inform the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2021-2026’ – PowerPoint slide deck
* ‘Childcare in Essex – Parents’ views - survey results; Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service extract – Word document (February 2021)
* *‘Childcare in Essex – Parents’ views survey – themed respondents’ comments to question 98, 103 and 104 – Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service – Excel sheet (February 2021) – restricted sharing*
* *‘Childcare in Essex – Parents’ views survey – themed respondents’ comments to questions 103 and 104 – Excel sheet (February 2021) – restricted sharing*

### Key findings

**Background:**

* There were more than 1,200 responses to the survey.
* Majority of respondents were working parents living as couples, not receiving any income or other support packages.

**Types of childcare used:**

* For pre-school children, most respondents used formal childcare – to provide stimulation, enable parent to work and to help get ‘ready for school’. Location and the setting being the best for the child were the main reasons for selecting them.
* For school-aged children, more than half didn’t use any childcare. Formal childcare was used to enable parents to work.
* Under a third of parents used informal childcare – overwhelmingly provided by grandparents. This is driven by the combination of no cost and child enjoying being with family.
* Not using any childcare appears to be driven more by personal choice than actual cost.

**SEND:**

* Relatively small sample (n=230).
* Parents of pre-school children tend to suspect SEND, whereas parents of school-aged children tend to have a formal diagnosis.
* Most frequent conditions are Autism and ADHD.
* Provision of one-to-one/additional support is the most important to enable these children to attend formal childcare. This is more likely to be provided to pre-schoolers than school-aged children.

**Getting ready for school:**

* Majority of parents of recent ‘school starters’ have felt confident about their child’s transition to school. This applies for two-thirds of those starting next year (Sept 2021), too.
* Majority had an excellent or good experience of transition – good communication received from the school before starting school was key to an overall positive experience.

**Term of birth:**

* Only 38% (n=51) of parents of recent Summer-born school starters had concerns, usually based on the child being younger and potentially not being emotionally and developmentally ready to start school yet.

**ECC resources:**

* Awareness and thus usage of ECC’s existing resources (TLC, FIS, ECFWS) is low. Those who have used it generally rated it as ‘helpful’ and ‘clear’.

**Knowing other parents:**

* Majority of parents place great importance on knowing other parents of children of a similar age, which provides much needed support networks and opportunities for social interaction (although also comparisons between children and potential competitiveness).
* Playgroups and the school/childcare setting are the key places to get to know each other, but ECC could support this further by providing more classes/courses/groups and more open access spaces.

**Supporting children’s learning while at home:**

* Most parents feel confident at supporting their children’s learning while at home, drawing on a wide range of sources of information, albeit not ‘official’ as such, with general Google search, family, school and friends being the key sources.

**Childcare needs during and after coronavirus lockdown:**

* Less than 20% (n=79) of key worker children continued to attend a formal childcare setting during the first coronavirus lockdown (March – May 2020), with their needs being met. The rest either decided to keep their children at home, or their usual childcare setting was closed.
* Responses indicate no particular destabilisation of the formal childcare market as a result of the coronavirus lockdown. Majority of ‘keyworker’ children returned to their formal childcare setting after 1 June 2020, without a change to their childcare needs.
* For those whose childcare needs have changed, this is often related to changes in work patterns or not being able to use family for childcare. Respondents are split on how long this may last.

**FEEE and Tax-free childcare:**

* Awareness of FEEE (2, 3 and 4) and the Extended entitlement is high (91%). Main benefits are around getting children ‘ready for school’ and improving family finances.
* Two thirds of respondents are aware of Tax-free childcare, but less than a third use it.

**Further comments:**

The top 5 themes mentioned were:

1. Supporting working parents through the provision of suitable and affordable childcare
2. General support for parents, especially new parents (importance of baby/parent/toddler groups)
3. Need for more wrap around care and holiday clubs
4. FEEE eligibility from the age of 2, supporting working parents
5. The high cost of childcare negatively impacting family finances

### Survey results

#### 1. Welcome

*At Essex County Council we are in the process of renewing our plans for early years and childcare via the Early Years and Childcare Strategy for Essex 2021 – 2026.*

*We also have a legal responsibility to make sure there is the right sort, and amount, of childcare across Essex via a Childcare Sufficiency Audit.*

*As a parent of children aged 0-19 (or 25 if your child has special education needs or disabilities) living in Essex, your views and experiences of childcare and early years are essential for us to understand how to evolve our plans. We want to hear from you whether you use formal childcare or not. As this is so important, we will be asking about a variety of topics which will take around 20 minutes to complete.*

*Please answer as honestly as you can, your views are important to us!*

*By completing the survey, you agree for your feedback to be used to inform:*

*1) the Childcare Sufficiency Audit and*

*2) the development of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy for Essex*

*Your feedback will be treated in the strictest of confidence and will remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary.*

*Please respond by Tuesday 24th November 2020 to have your views included.*

*Thank you for taking part, we really appreciate your feedback.*

*If you have any questions, please contact early.years@essex.gov.uk*

*Essex County Council fully complies with information legislation. If you would like the full details of how we use personal data, and the rights you have about its use, please go to https://www.essex.gov.uk/privacy-community (‘Research and Citizen Insight team’) or call 03457 430430.*

#### 2. Before you start...

*You will be asked only questions relevant to your situation.*

*For example, if you say you have pre-school children only, you will be asked about topics only relevant to pre-school children.*

*At the end of the survey you can leave any further comments you may have.*

*Please use the NEXT button to navigate through the survey. DO NOT use the forward and back arrows on your web browser.*

*If you need to pause the survey and come back to it, select "Save and Continue Later" at the bottom of the screen. You will be prompted to provide your name and email address, in order to send you a unique URL link to pick up where you left the survey.*

*Some questions ask about your experience during the coronavirus pandemic but otherwise please answer the questions based on your general experience.*

*If you wish to withdraw your data, please contact research@essex.gov.uk by Wednesday 25th November 2020. After this date, your data will have been combined with that of others. Make a note of the date and time you completed the survey to help us identify your responses.*

*Thank you.*

#### 3. About your family

| **1. Do you have any children in the following age groups?** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes** | **No** | **Response Total** |
| **Pre-school age (0 - 4 years)** | **73.8% (931)** | 26.2% (331) | 1262 |
| **School age (4 years and older)** | **60.8% (767)** | 39.2% (495) | 1262 |
|  | | answered | 1262 |
| skipped | 0 |

Over a third of respondents had only pre-school children and over a quarter had only school aged children.

Over a third had both pre-school and school aged children.

Overall, respondents answered on behalf of 1236 pre-school and 1040 school aged children – 2276 children in total.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age group** | **Total number of children per age group** | **% of total number of children** |
| 1 year and below  (0 - 12 months) | 231 | 10.1 |
| 1 – 2 years (13 - 24 months) | 203 | 8.9 |
| 2 – 3 years (25 - 36 months) | 326 | 14.3 |
| 3 – 4 years (37 - 48 months) | 326 | 14.3 |
| 4 – 5 years (49 - 60 months) | 150 | 6.6 |
| 4 – 5 years (i.e. Reception class) | 208 | 9.1 |
| 5 – 7 years | 293 | 12.9 |
| 7 – 11 years | 336 | 14.8 |
| 11 – 14 years | 110 | 4.8 |
| 14 years and older | 93 | 4.1 |
| **Total** | **2276** | **100** |

Majority of respondents had **one or two children**.

| **2. Please select all the statements that apply to you.**  ***[The statements below are used as selection criteria for children to be eligible for Free School Meals]*** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | I receive Income Support | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.68% | 21 |
| 2 | I receive Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.24% | 3 |
| 3 | **I receive Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit) as my annual income is below £16,190** | |  | | --- | |  | | **5.52%** | **69** |
| 4 | I receive Pension Guarantee Credit | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.08% | 1 |
| 5 | I receive income related Employment and Support Allowance | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.56% | 7 |
| 6 | I receive support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999 | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.08% | 1 |
| 7 | I receive Working Tax Credit run-on, paid for 4 weeks after stopping qualifying for Working Tax Credit | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.56% | 7 |
| 8 | **I receive Universal Credit (my partner and I have a combined income from work of £15,400 or less a year, after tax)** | |  | | --- | |  | | **8.09%** | **101** |
| 9 | My child is looked after by Essex County Council | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.64% | 8 |
| 10 | **My child has an Education, health and care (EHC) plan** | |  | | --- | |  | | **3.12%** | **39** |
| 11 | **My child gets a Disability Allowance** | |  | | --- | |  | | **5.28%** | **66** |
| 12 | My child has left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.72% | 9 |
| 13 | Prefer not to say | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.40% | 30 |
| 14 | None of the above | |  | | --- | |  | | 77.74% | 971 |
|  | | | answered | 1249 |
| skipped | 13 |

| **3. How would you describe your parenting situation?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Couple (including married / living with partner or co-parenting situations) | |  | | --- | |  | | 88.43% | 1116 |
| 2 | Lone parent | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.57% | 146 |
|  | | | answered | 1262 |
| skipped | 0 |

#### 4. Your work status - couple

| **4. What is your family’s work status?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Myself and my partner / co-parent are both working | |  | | --- | |  | | 65.89% | 736 |
| 2 | One person is currently working | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.86% | 233 |
| 3 | Neither myself, nor my partner/ co-parent are working | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.25% | 14 |
| 4 | One person is on maternity/parental leave and one is working | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.37% | 127 |
| 5 | One person is on maternity/parental leave and one is not working | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.36% | 4 |
| 6 | Prefer not to say | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.27% | 3 |
|  | | | answered | 1117 |
| skipped | 145 |

88% of survey respondents were living as couples.

Majority of respondents were **working parents**. Two thirds of couples had both parents working, followed by 21% where one parent worked.

#### 5. Your work status - lone parent

| **5. What is your family’s work status?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | I am working | |  | | --- | |  | | 71.23% | 104 |
| 2 | I am not currently working | |  | | --- | |  | | 26.03% | 38 |
| 3 | I am on maternity/parental leave | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.05% | 3 |
| 4 | Prefer not to say | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.68% | 1 |
|  | | | answered | 146 |
| skipped | 1116 |

12% of survey respondents were lone parents. Over a quarter of them were not working, but the majority (71%) were.

#### 6. A bit more about you

| **6. What is your current household income before tax?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Under £15,000 | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.36% | 118 |
| 2 | £15,000 - £24,999 | |  | | --- | |  | | 8.56% | 108 |
| 3 | £25,000 - £34,999 | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.07% | 127 |
| 4 | £35,000 - £44,999 | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.88% | 175 |
| **5** | **£45,000 - £59,999** | |  | | --- | |  | | **17.61%** | **222** |
| 6 | £60,000 - £74,999 | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.69% | 160 |
| 7 | £75,000 - £89,999 | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.34% | 80 |
| 8 | £90,000 - £100,000 | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.36% | 55 |
| 9 | Over £100,000 | |  | | --- | |  | | 7.22% | 91 |
| 10 | Prefer not to say | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.91% | 125 |
|  | | | answered | 1261 |
| skipped | 1 |

Household income varied among respondents, with more than **60% earning at least £35,000 p.a**. The **£45k-£59k** bracket was the largest, with 222 households (18%).

Majority did not receive any support package, but 8% received **Universal Credit** and 6% Child Tax Credit. An EHCP was in place in 39 households (3%).

| **8. Which of these groups do you consider you belong to?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **White British** | |  | | --- | |  | | **89.14%** | **1124** |
| 2 | White Irish | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.71% | 9 |
| 3 | White Eastern European | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.06% | 26 |
| 4 | White other background | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.22% | 28 |
| 5 | Black or Black British African | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.32% | 4 |
| 6 | Black or Black British Caribbean | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.56% | 7 |
| 7 | Black or Black British other background |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 8 | Mixed White & Black African | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.08% | 1 |
| 9 | Mixed White & Black Caribbean | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.32% | 4 |
| 10 | Mixed White & Asian | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.56% | 7 |
| 11 | Mixed other background | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.71% | 9 |
| 12 | Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.08% | 1 |
| 13 | Asian or Asian British Indian | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.95% | 12 |
| 14 | Asian or Asian British Pakistani |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 15 | Asian or Asian British other background | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.24% | 3 |
| 16 | Chinese | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.56% | 7 |
| 17 | Other ethnic group / background | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.40% | 5 |
| 18 | Prefer not to say | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.11% | 14 |
|  | | | answered | 1261 |
| skipped | 1 |

| **9. Which district or borough do you live in? (This will be the council you or your household pays council tax to.)** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Basildon | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.27% | 117 |
| 2 | **Braintree** | |  | | --- | |  | | **11.17%** | **141** |
| 3 | Brentwood | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.12% | 52 |
| 4 | Castle Point | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.93% | 37 |
| 5 | **Chelmsford** | |  | | --- | |  | | **19.10%** | **241** |
| 6 | **Colchester** | |  | | --- | |  | | **18.15%** | **229** |
| 7 | Epping Forest | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.28% | 54 |
| 8 | Harlow | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.44% | 56 |
| 9 | Maldon | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.54% | 32 |
| 10 | Rochford | |  | | --- | |  | | 8.80% | 111 |
| 11 | Tendring | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.90% | 125 |
| 12 | Uttlesford | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.91% | 62 |
| 13 | Prefer not to say | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.40% | 5 |
| 14 | None of the above |  | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | | | answered | 1262 |
| skipped | 0 |

Most respondents lived in **Chelmsford, Colchester** and **Braintree**.

Chelmsford and Colchester were considerably over-represented compared to the 2011 census, as was Rochford.

Basildon, Castle Point and Epping Forest were under-represented.

*Majority of respondents also provided their postcode, allowing for more detailed mapping for the purpose of the Childcare sufficiency audit. Please contact the Research & Citizen Insight team on* [*reseach@essex.gov.uk*](mailto:reseach@essex.gov.uk) *should this be required.*

#### 7. Childcare for your pre-school children

| **11. How many pre-school aged children do you have in the following age groups? [select number]** | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4 or more** | **Response Total** |
| **Select number of children** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 year and below (0 – 12 months) | | 75.2% (700) | 24.1% (224) | Detail withheld – numbers are too small | | | 931 |  |
| 1 – 2 years (13 – 24 months) | | 78.2% (728) | 21.5% (200) | 931 |  |
| 2 – 3 years (25 - 36 months) | | 65.0% (605) | 33.9% (316) | 931 |  |
| 3 – 4 years (37 - 48 months) | | 65.0% (605) | 33.9% (316) | 931 |  |
| 4 – 5 years (49 - 60 months) | | 83.9% (781) | 15.6% (145) | 931 |  |
|  | | | | | | **answered** | **931** |  |
| skipped | 331 |  |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age group** | **Total number of children per age group** |
| 1 year and below (0 - 12 months) | 231 |
| 1 – 2 years (13 - 24 months) | 203 |
| 2 – 3 years (25 - 36 months) | 326 |
| 3 – 4 years (37 - 48 months) | 326 |
| 4 – 5 years (49 - 60 months) | 150 |
| **Total** | **1236 children from 931 households** |

|  | | **12. When were your pre-school children born? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | | **Response Percent (denominator: no. of respondents)** | **Response Percent (denominator: no. of pre-school children))** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Between 1 Sept - 31 Dec (Autumn term)** | | |  | | --- | |  | | **43.63%** | **38.8%** | **404** |
| 2 | Between 1 Jan - 31 Mar (Spring term) | | |  | | --- | |  | | 27.00% | 24.0% | 250 |
| 3 | Between 1 Apr - 31 Aug (Summer term) | | |  | | --- | |  | | 41.90% | 37.2% | 388 |
| No. of responses (i.e. approx. no. of children)\* | | | |  | 1042 |  |
| Answered (no. of respondents) | | | | 926 |  |  |
| Skipped | | | | 336 |  |  |

*\*Respondents could have been answering on behalf of multiple children. If one respondent had two children, one born in the Autumn term and one in the Spring term, they would have selected both Autumn and Spring term (and thus would count as 2 responses). However, if one respondent had two children both born in the same term, they would have selected this only once. Therefore, the number of responses provides an approximate, but a lower number of children than indicated in Q11. Still, percentages based on the no. of responses are in this case more accurate than if based on the number of respondents.*

For the impact of being Summer born on starting school, refer to Section 43, Q83.

Among both pre-school and school-aged children, those born in the Spring term were the least represented. Combined, **almost 40%** of children were **Summer born**.

| **13. Do you use any childcare for your pre-school aged children? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | No, I do not use any childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 17.29% | 161 |
| 2 | I have informal childcare arrangements, e.g. with my family or friends | |  | | --- | |  | | 32.87% | 306 |
| 3 | **I use formal childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **71.00%** | **661** |
|  | | | answered | 931 |
| skipped | 331 |

#### 8. Pre-school children: Formal childcare

Formal childcare is **used by more than 70%** (n=661) of respondents with pre-school children.

| **15. Select your top 3 reasons for using formal childcare. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Enables me to work** | |  | | --- | |  | | **69.53%** | **461** |
| 2 | Gives me a break | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.11% | 67 |
| 3 | **A stimulating environment for my child** | |  | | --- | |  | | **70.59%** | **468** |
| 4 | **To help my child get ‘ready for school’** | |  | | --- | |  | | **47.66%** | **316** |
| 5 | To gain support with my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.47% | 23 |
| 6 | I don’t have access to any informal childcare (family and friends) | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.40% | 122 |
| 7 | To access the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE2) for 2-year olds (up to 15 hours) | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.13% | 34 |
| 8 | To access the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE3 and 4) for 3- and 4-year olds (up to 15 hours) ONLY | |  | | --- | |  | | 14.18% | 94 |
| 9 | To access the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE3 and 4) for 3- and 4-year olds AND Extended Entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds (up to 30 hours in total) | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.00% | 126 |
| 10 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.28% | 35 |
|  | | | answered | 663 |
| skipped | 599 |

**Top 3 reasons for using formal childcare (Q15):**

1. A stimulating environment for my child (71%)
2. Enables me to work (70%)
3. To help my child get ‘ready for school’ (48%)

Additionally, parents used formal childcare to benefit from the range **of Free Early Years Entitlements**, in the following order of importance:

* FEEE3 and 4 AND Extended entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds (19%)
* FEEE3 and 4 only (14%)
* FEEE2 (5%)

*“To provide experience outside the home alongside peers as a gradual natural progression towards independence.”*

| **16. What type of formal childcare setting(s) do you use for all your pre-school children? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Day nursery – Full or part-time care for babies and children up to the age of 5, usually open 8am - 6pm, all year** | |  | | --- | |  | | **50.38%** | **333** |
| 2 | School nursery classes – Attached to an infant or primary school for under 5s, between school hours in term time | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.75% | 38 |
| 3 | Woodcroft or Tanglewood maintained nursery school – Care for under 5s, between school hours in term time. | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.72% | 18 |
| 4 | **Pre-school (including playgroups) – Sessional care for 2 to 5 year olds, usually term time only** | |  | | --- | |  | | **34.34%** | **227** |
| 5 | Academy Nursery provision – Attached to an academy for under 5s, between school hours in term time | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.15% | 1 |
| 6 | Independent school – Private schools charging a fee | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.45% | 3 |
| 7 | **Childminder – Provide childcare in their own home** | |  | | --- | |  | | **16.79%** | **111** |
| 8 | Nanny or au pair – Provide childcare in your own home | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.21% | 8 |
|  | | | answered | 661 |
| skipped | 601 |

Majority of children attended the following **settings**:

1. Day nursery (50%)
2. Pre-school (34%)
3. Childminder (17%)

| **17. Select your top 3 reasons for choosing this type of childcare. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Location** | |  | | --- | |  | | **48.64%** | **322** |
| 2 | Days of care offered | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.44% | 36 |
| 3 | Hours of care offered | |  | | --- | |  | | 24.62% | 163 |
| 4 | Flexibility of care offered | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.69% | 84 |
| 5 | Price | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.56% | 103 |
| 6 | Sibling already attending | |  | | --- | |  | | 8.01% | 53 |
| 7 | Personal recommendation | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.79% | 131 |
| 8 | **Provider’s reputation** | |  | | --- | |  | | **30.21%** | **200** |
| 9 | Ofsted rating | |  | | --- | |  | | 14.95% | 99 |
| 10 | Term time provision only meets our needs (applicable for only certain settings) | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.82% | 65 |
| 11 | Best meets my work (or other) needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 28.55% | 189 |
| 12 | Best meets my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.72% | 18 |
| 13 | Best meets my child’s other needs (e.g. food intolerance, need for a quieter environment) | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.98% | 33 |
| 14 | **Best environment for my child** | |  | | --- | |  | | **44.71%** | **296** |
| 15 | Child’s choice | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.66% | 11 |
| 16 | I had no other option | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.95% | 46 |
|  | | | answered | 662 |
| skipped | 600 |

Top **reasons for selecting** these particular **settings**:

1. Location (49%)
2. Best environment for my child (45%)
3. Provider’s reputation (30%)
4. Best meets my work (or other) needs (29%)
5. Hours of care offered (25%)

| **18. Does any of your pre-school children attend more than one type of formal childcare, e.g. childminder AND nursery?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.09% | 67 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 89.91% | 597 |
|  | | | answered | 664 |
| skipped | 598 |

Only **10%** (n=65) **attended more than one setting**. This tended to be mostly to accommodate parents’ **work or other patterns** (49%).

#### 9. Pre-school children: Using more than one type of formal childcare

| **19. Select your top 3 reasons why your child/children attend more than one setting. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Works best around my work (or other) pattern** | |  | | --- | |  | | **49.23%** | **32** |
| 2 | One setting alone does not cover all the days I need | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.46% | 12 |
| 3 | One setting alone does not cover all the hours I need | |  | | --- | |  | | 30.77% | 20 |
| 4 | I need both term time and holiday provision | |  | | --- | |  | | 32.31% | 21 |
| 5 | I wanted variety for my child | |  | | --- | |  | | 36.92% | 24 |
| 6 | One of the settings is better at preparing my child for school | |  | | --- | |  | | 24.62% | 16 |
| 7 | One of the settings is better at supporting my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.54% | 1 |
| 8 | I cannot access all my Free Early Years Entitlement (for 2, 3- and 4-year olds) hours at a single setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.08% | 2 |
| 9 | I cannot access all my Extended hours for 3- and 4-year olds (up to 30 hours) at a single setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.15% | 4 |
| 10 | It works out cheaper to use more than one provider | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.92% | 11 |
|  | | | answered | 65 |
| skipped | 1197 |
| If you said that 'one setting alone does not cover all the hours I need', what hours do you find it difficult to find formal childcare for? (13 comments)  These are generally longer hours, with an earlier start and later finish, i.e. 7am to 7pm, with some needing 6am – 8pm. | | | | |
| |  | | --- | | * Before 9am after 3pm * 3pm-5 * Between 3pm-6pm * Half day hours * 7am - 9am and then 3pm - 7pm * Unsociable hours * Need earlier availability * The nursery my daughter attends doesn’t take children under 2 so my son has to attend a childminder * Pre-school keeps Fridays for school starters only * 3pm to 5pm because my daughter is under school age she has to be included in childminder ratios. To date I still don't have any childcare provision for this time which will become a problem when I am back in the office for work. * School nursery only offers afternoon sessions * 6am - 8am and 6pm - 8pm | | | | | |

#### 10. Communication with your pre-school childcare setting

**Majority** of respondents (96%) **received ‘regular’ communications** from their childcare settings.

| **20. Do you receive regular communication from your childcare setting?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 95.91% | 633 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.09% | 27 |
|  | | | answered | 660 |
| skipped | 602 |

| **21. What information do you receive from your childcare setting? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Progress my child is making | |  | | --- | |  | | 90.15% | 558 |
| 2 | Things my child likes doing | |  | | --- | |  | | 78.19% | 484 |
| 3 | General information on daily routine, such as meals, activities etc. | |  | | --- | |  | | 82.39% | 510 |
| 4 | Raising of general concerns | |  | | --- | |  | | 55.25% | 342 |
| 5 | Raising of special education need and disability concern | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.69% | 60 |
| 6 | Suggestions on how I can enhance child’s learning at home | |  | | --- | |  | | 49.43% | 306 |
| 7 | Signposting to other services that I may access for my child | |  | | --- | |  | | 25.04% | 155 |
|  | | | answered | 619 |
| skipped | 643 |

Responses were relatively **balanced**; except ‘raising of SEND concerns’ (10%); however this tended to apply to a specific group of individuals.

Majority of respondents **(84%)** found the information **‘helpful’** (46%) **or ‘very helpful’** (38%) in supporting what they do with their child at home.

| **22. Select which best describes the information you receive from your childcare setting in supporting what you do with your child at home.** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.32% | 2 |
| 2 | Not helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.35% | 27 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.97% | 68 |
| 4 | **Helpful** | |  | | --- | |  | | **46.29%** | **287** |
| 5 | Very helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 38.06% | 236 |
|  | | | answered | 620 |
| skipped | 642 |

#### 12. Pre-school children: Not using any childcare

Only 17% of parents of pre-school children did not use any childcare, compared to more than half of parents of school-aged children.

The reasons were the same for both groups; however while for pre-schoolers the reasons were fairly balanced, there was considerably less need for childcare for school-aged children.

Personal choice appeared to be a slightly stronger driver than cost, but both scored relatively high.

Furthermore, cost of childcare was brought up extensively in respondents’ comments, which indicates that while the cost itself may not be the most important, its importance is still high – please see Section 53 (Q103 and Q104).

| **23. What are your top 3 reasons for not using any childcare? [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **I don’t need childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **46.58%** | **75** |
| 2 | **I prefer to look after my child myself** | |  | | --- | |  | | **42.86%** | **69** |
| 3 | I don’t know how to find childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.11% | 5 |
| 4 | I could not find childcare that met my work (or other) needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.73% | 6 |
| 5 | I could not find childcare that met my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.24% | 2 |
| 6 | I could not to find childcare that met my child’s other needs (e.g. food intolerance, need for a quieter environment) | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.24% | 2 |
| 7 | I could not to find childcare in a location suitable to my needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.48% | 4 |
| 8 | **I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **40.99%** | **66** |
| 9 | I could not access a place at my preferred childcare setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.48% | 4 |
| 10 | Our usual childcare setting is still closed due to Covid-19 | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.24% | 2 |
| 11 | I am concerned about Covid-19 so not using childcare at the moment. | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.15% | 26 |
|  | | | answered | 161 |
| skipped | 1101 |

#### 13. Pre-school children: Informal childcare

Just **under a third** of parents of both pre-school and school-aged children used informal childcare, provided overwhelmingly by **grandparents** (95.3% for pre-schoolers and 89.7% for school-aged children). The reasons are the same for both groups. The **combination of no cost and child being with family members**, to the enjoyment of both parties, appeared to be the main driver.

| **24. Who provides informal childcare for your pre-school child/children? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Grandparent | |  | | --- | |  | | 95.32% | 285 |
| 2 | Older sibling | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.67% | 5 |
| 3 | Another relative | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.37% | 31 |
| 4 | Friend or neighbour | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.69% | 17 |
| 5 | Other | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.34% | 4 |
|  | | | answered | 299 |
| skipped | 963 |

| **25. Select your top 3 reasons for using informal childcare? [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **I prefer to keep my child with my family or friends** | |  | | --- | |  | | **42.47%** | **127** |
| 2 | I don’t know how to find formal childcare |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | **I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **44.48%** | **133** |
| 4 | **There is no cost for me** | |  | | --- | |  | | **55.18%** | **165** |
| 5 | I pay for informal childcare, but less than formal childcare would cost me | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.35% | 13 |
| 6 | I could not find formal childcare that met my work (or other) needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.37% | 31 |
| 7 | I could not find formal childcare that met my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.00% | 3 |
| 8 | I could not to find formal childcare that met my child’s other needs (e.g. food intolerance, need for a quieter environment) | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.33% | 1 |
| 9 | **A mix of formal and informal childcare is the best situation for us** | |  | | --- | |  | | **43.81%** | **131** |
| 10 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.36% | 28 |
|  | | | answered | 299 |
| skipped | 963 |

**Top 4 reasons for using informal childcare (Q25):**

1. There is no cost to me (55%)
2. I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare (45%)
3. A mix of formal and informal childcare is the best situation for us (44%)
4. I prefer to keep my child with family or friends (43%)

Children enjoy being with their grandparents. Family members also provide the flexibility to cover parents’ working hours, school holidays or gaps in current formal provision. Some parents of pre-schoolers have struggled finding childcare during Covid. Some parents of younger children are only able to afford a limited number of days in formal childcare.

Respondents’ ‘other’ comments:

* *“Grandparents really want to help and look after child.”*
* *“My child is on the waiting list for formal nursery.”*
* *“We can only afford 1 day a week at nursery.”*

Cost of childcare was also brought up extensively in Section 53 (Q103 and Q104).

#### 14. About your pre-school child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND)

***(See section 28 for the perspective of school-aged children with SEND)***

Around **8%** (n=75) of respondents with **pre-school** children reported their child either having SEND (n=55) or being unsure (n=20).

SEND was more prevalent among school-aged children – 21% (n=159), where the majority stated having SEND (n=147) and only few being unsure (n=12).

| **14. Do any of your pre-school children have a special educational need or disability (SEND)? Your child does NOT need to have a formal diagnosis for you to answer ‘yes’ to this question.** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Yes** | |  | | --- | |  | | **5.91%** | **55** |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 91.94% | 856 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.15% | 20 |
|  | | | answered | 931 |
| skipped | 331 |

| **26. Please select the situations that apply to you. [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | My child has been formally diagnosed | |  | | --- | |  | | 24.64% | 17 |
| 2 | My child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.04% | 9 |
| 3 | **I suspect my child has a special educational need or disability** | |  | | --- | |  | | **50.72%** | **35** |
| 4 | Other people have suggested that my child has a special educational need or disability | |  | | --- | |  | | 33.33% | 23 |
| 5 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 28.99% | 20 |
|  | | | answered | 69 |
| skipped | 1193 |

For pre-schoolers, parents’ suspicion of SEND was the most frequent, followed by other people suggesting child may have SEND needs. Formal diagnosis was mentioned by a quarter of respondents.

Those selecting ‘other’ described a range of situations of being in the process of being diagnosed, from being referred, wating for an assessment, actual diagnosis or waiting for an EHCP.

| **27. Please describe your child’s special educational need or disability. If you have more than one pre-school child with a special educational need or disability, please tell us about all of them, or as much as you feel comfortable with.** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Open-Ended Question | 100.00% | 59 |
|  | | | |
|  | | answered | 59 |
| skipped | 1203 |

The most frequently mentioned conditions were:

* ASD (autism) - either suspected or diagnosed – half of children
* Speech and language delay/disability – 17 children (29%)
* ADHD – 8 children
* Developmental delay (including global development delay) – 8 children
* Sensory, including sensory processing disorder – 6 children

Around a half of children had a single condition, while the rest had multiple conditions. A few children had very complex needs.

| **28. Is the need/disability you described above something that your child needs additional support with, to make it possible for him/her to access formal childcare?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 57.14% | 40 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 42.86% | 30 |
|  | | | answered | 70 |
| skipped | 1192 |

More than half (57%; n=40) of respondents stated that their child needs additional support to make it possible to attend childcare.

Majority of these (69%; n=27) have received this support, although there is room for improvement.

One-to-one support being in place appears to be the key.

#### 15. Receiving support for your pre-school child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND)

| **29. Has your child received the support needed to enable him/her to access formal childcare?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 69.23% | 27 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 30.77% | 12 |
|  | | | answered | 39 |
| skipped | 1223 |

**Support children have received that works…** (23 comments) (Q30):

Most frequently (n=12), children need **one-to-one support**. This may include an assistant or extra support with specific tasks.

5 children received speech and language therapy. Three parents specifically mentioned One Plan being in place, two welcomed regular feedback.

**Support children need but have not received** (6 comments) (Q31):

Need for one-to-one support or additional help, e.g. with social interaction.

*“My son does not interact or play with other children or adults and his nursery staff are too stretched to adapt an activity for him to be included.”*

#### 16. Communication with childcare setting about additional needs or disabilities (SEND)

On the whole, **most** parents whose children have SEND and attended a formal childcare setting felt that **their child received the level of support that they needed** for their development.

*Please note small sample sizes.*

* 85% (n=40) felt that their **child received** the level of **support** that they needed for their development.
* 89% (n=42) **regularly received information** from their childcare setting about their child’s development.
* 57% (n=27) stated that their childcare setting had **not raised concerns** about their child’s development with them.

| **32. Has the childcare setting raised concerns about your child’s development with you?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 42.55% | 20 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 57.45% | 27 |
|  | | | answered | 47 |
| skipped | 1215 |

| **33. Do you feel that your child receives the level of support for their development that they need?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 85.11% | 40 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 14.89% | 7 |
|  | | | answered | 47 |
| skipped | 1215 |

| **34. Does the childcare setting regularly share information with you about your child’s development?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 89.36% | 42 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.64% | 5 |
|  | | | answered | 47 |
| skipped | 1215 |

#### 17. Awareness of the Free Early Years Entitlement and Extended entitlement

| **35. Are you aware of the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE) funding for 2, 3- and 4-year olds (up to 15 hours free childcare) or the Extended funding entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds (up to 30 hours free childcare)?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 91.48% | 827 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 8.52% | 77 |
|  | | | answered | 904 |
| skipped | 358 |

**Awareness** of FEEE (2, 3 and 4) and the Extended entitlement was **high**, at 91%.

Those aware were equally split between those accessing and not accessing it (approx. 410 each).

The most frequently accessed were the entitlements for 3-year olds, largely helping with getting children ready for school and improving family finances.

Those not accessing FEEE were either not yet eligible due to child’s age or due their financial circumstances.

FEEE/EE was brought up extensively in the open-ended comments in Section 53 (Q103 and Q104).

#### 18. and 19. Accessing and the experience of the Free Early Years Entitlement and Extended entitlement

| **36. Do you access any of the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE) funding (for 2, 3- and 4-year olds) (up to 15 hours free childcare) or the Extended funding entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds (up to 30 hours free childcare)?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 49.70% | 410 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 50.30% | 415 |
|  | | | answered | 825 |
| skipped | 437 |

| **37. Which of the FEEE or Extended entitlement do you use? Please answer in relation to all your children. [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Free Early Years Entitlement funding for 2-year olds (FEEE2) | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.79% | 56 |
| 2 | **Free Early Years Entitlement funding for 3-year olds (FEEE3)** | |  | | --- | |  | | **61.08%** | **248** |
| 3 | Extended funding entitlement for 3-year olds | |  | | --- | |  | | 28.57% | 116 |
| 4 | Free Early Years Entitlement funding for 4-year olds (FEEE4) | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.79% | 56 |
| 5 | Extended funding entitlement for 4-year olds | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.90% | 28 |
|  | | | answered | 406 |
| skipped | 856 |

| **38. How has accessing the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE) or Extended entitlement benefited your family? [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Improved family finances** | |  | | --- | |  | | **38.64%** | **153** |
| 2 | Provided the family with flexibility without an additional cost | |  | | --- | |  | | 21.21% | 84 |
| 3 | **Allowed my child to attend a childcare setting, otherwise we would not have been able to afford it** | |  | | --- | |  | | **37.88%** | **150** |
| 4 | Made it easier in terms of my (or my partner’s) employment | |  | | --- | |  | | 21.97% | 87 |
| 5 | **Allowed my child to attend for more hours** | |  | | --- | |  | | **31.82%** | **126** |
| 6 | Improved family life | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.62% | 46 |
| 7 | **Helping my child to get ‘ready for school’** | |  | | --- | |  | | **63.38%** | **251** |
| 8 | Other benefits (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.05% | 20 |
|  | | | answered | 396 |
| skipped | 866 |

**FEEE has benefited families in the following ways**:

1. Helping my child to get ‘ready for school’ (63%)
2. Improved family finances (39%)
3. Allowed my child to attend a childcare setting, otherwise we would not have been able to afford it (38%)
4. Allowed my child to attend for more hours (32%)

#### 20. Not accessing the Free Early Years Entitlement or Extended entitlement

| **39. Select your top 3 reasons why you are not accessing the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEEE) funding for 2, 3- and 4-year olds (up to 15 hours) or the Extended funding entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds (30 hours free childcare)? [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | I don’t need it | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.37% | 26 |
| 2 | I don’t want to put my child into a formal childcare setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.21% | 9 |
| 3 | I don't know how to access it | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.17% | 17 |
| 4 | It is too complicated to access | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.23% | 5 |
| 5 | **My child/children are not yet old enough to access any of these childcare entitlements** | |  | | --- | |  | | **65.69%** | **268** |
| 6 | **We are not eligible for the Free Early Years Entitlement for 2-year olds (FEEE2) (up to 15 hours)** | |  | | --- | |  | | **51.96%** | **212** |
| 7 | We are not eligible for the Extended funding entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds (up to 30 hours) | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.54% | 43 |
| 8 | Our childcare setting does not offer FEEE places | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.98% | 4 |
| 9 | Our childcare setting does not offer the Extended entitlement places | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.49% | 2 |
| 10 | Even with these entitlements, childcare is still too expensive for me | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.70% | 11 |
| 11 | Paying for meals and other activities separately does not make it worth it | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.74% | 3 |
| 12 | My work pattern makes it hard to get the flexible number of hours I need | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.96% | 8 |
| 13 | I am concerned about Covid-19 so not accessing the FEEE entitlement or Extended entitlement at the moment | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.45% | 10 |
|  | | | answered | 408 |
| skipped | 854 |

**Top 3 reasons for not accessing FEEE/Extended entitlement were:**

1. Child not yet being old enough to access any of the childcare entitlements (66%)
2. Not being eligible for FEEE2 (52%)
3. Not being eligible for the Extended funding entitlement (11%)

#### 21. Awareness of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of pre-school children)

Please note these questions were asked separately of respondents with pre-school children and school-aged children, at different points in the survey. To give a complete picture, here they are presented together.

| **40. Are you aware of Tax-free childcare? This is a scheme open to working families in England with children aged 0-11 (or 16 if disabled), where you can get up to £2,000 per year for each of your children to help with the cost of childcare. Eligibility criteria apply. (Please note this scheme is different to childcare vouchers.)**  **PRE-SCHOOL** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 66.93% | 591 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 33.07% | 292 |
|  | | | answered | 883 |
| skipped | 379 |

#### 22. Use of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of pre-school children)

| **41. Do you use Tax-free childcare? PRE-SCHOOL** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 38.03% | 224 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 33.96% | 200 |
| 3 | No - not eligible | |  | | --- | |  | | 14.77% | 87 |
| 4 | No - use childcare vouchers instead | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.24% | 78 |
|  | | | answered | 589 |
| skipped | 673 |

#### 31. Awareness of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of school-aged children)

| **63. Are you aware of Tax-free childcare? This is a scheme open to working families in England with children aged 0-11 (or 16 if disabled), where you can get up to £2,000 per year for each of your children to help with the cost of childcare. Eligibility criteria apply. (Please note this scheme is different to childcare vouchers.)**  **SCHOOL-AGED** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 61.47% | 201 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 38.53% | 126 |
|  | | | answered | 327 |
| skipped | 935 |

#### 32. Use of Tax-Free Childcare (parents of school-aged children)

| **64. Do you use Tax-free childcare? SCHOOL-AGED** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.94% | 24 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 55.22% | 111 |
| 3 | No - not eligible | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.42% | 31 |
| 4 | No - use childcare vouchers instead | |  | | --- | |  | | 17.41% | 35 |
|  | | | answered | 201 |
| skipped | 1061 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Do you use Tax-free childcare?**  **ALL children (pre-school and school-aged)** | | | |
| **Answer Choice** | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | 31.4 | 248 |
| 2 | No | 39.4 | 311 |
| 3 | No - not eligible | 14.9 | 118 |
| 4 | No - use childcare vouchers instead | 14.3 | 113 |
| ***answered*** | | | **790** |

**Two-thirds** of respondents (n=792) were **aware** of tax-free childcare.

Just **over 30% used tax-free childcare**.

Others didn’t – either out of choice, not being eligible or using childcare vouchers instead.

Levels of awareness of the scheme were similar between respondents with pre-schoolers and school-aged children, however **usage** was much **higher** among those **with pre-school children** (38%, vs. 12% for school-aged).

Only 12% of respondents with school-aged children used tax-free childcare (and further 17% use vouchers). This is in line with the 28% that used formal childcare.

#### 23. Childcare for your school aged children

| **42. How many school aged children do you have in the following age groups? [select number]** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4 or more** | **Response Total** |
| **Select number of children** | | | | | | | |
| 4 – 5 years (i.e. Reception class) | 72.0% (535) | 27.6% (205) | 0.4% (3) | Detail withheld – numbers too small | | 743 |  |
| 5 – 7 years | 60.6% (450) | 38.1% (283) | 1.3% (10) | 743 |  |
| 7 – 11 years | 54.8% (407) | 38.0% (282) | 7.0% (52) | 743 |  |
| 11 – 14 years | 85.2% (633) | 12.8% (95) | 1.9% (14) | 743 |  |
| 14 years and older | 87.5% (650) | 10.2% (76) | 1.9% (14) | 743 |  |
|  | | | | | answered | 743 |  |
| skipped | 519 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age group** | **Total number of children per age group** |
| 4 – 5 years (i.e. Reception class) | 208 |
| 5 – 7 years | 293 |
| 7 – 11 years | 336 |
| 11 – 14 years | 110 |
| 14 years and older | 93 |
| **Total** | **1040 children from 743 households** |

|  | | **43. When were your school aged children born? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | | **Response Percent (denominator: no. of respondents)** | **Response Percent (denominator: no. of pre-school children))** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Between 1 Sept - 31 Dec (Autumn term) | | |  | | --- | |  | | 40.92% | 32.1% | 302 |
| 2 | Between 1 Jan - 31 Mar (Spring term) | | |  | | --- | |  | | 34.69% | 27.2% | 256 |
| 3 | Between 1 Apr - 31 Aug (Summer term) | | |  | | --- | |  | | 52.03% | 40.8% | 384 |
| No. of responses (i.e. approx. no. of children)\* | | | |  | 942 |  |
| Answered (no. of respondents) | | | | 738 |  |  |
| Skipped | | | | 524 |  |  |

*\*Respondents could have been answering on behalf of multiple children. If one respondent had two children, one born in the Autumn term and one in the Spring term, they would have selected both Autumn and Spring term (and thus would count as 2 responses). However, if one respondent had two children both born in the same term, they would have selected this only once. Therefore, the number of responses provides an approximate, but a lower number of children than indicated in Q42. Still, percentages based on the no. of responses are in this case more accurate than if based on the number of respondents.*

For the impact of being Summer born on starting school, refer to Section 43, Q83.

Among both pre-school and school aged children, those born in the Spring term were the least represented. Combined, **almost 40%** of children were **Summer born**.

| **44. Do you use any childcare for your school aged children? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **No, I do not use any childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **50.40%** | **374** |
| 2 | I have informal childcare arrangements, e.g. with my family or friends | |  | | --- | |  | | 30.32% | 225 |
| 3 | I use formal childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 28.17% | 209 |
|  | | | answered | 742 |
| skipped | 520 |

More than half of respondents did **not use any childcare** for their **school-aged** children.

#### 24. School aged children: Formal childcare

Formal childcare for school-aged children was used by around of quarter (28.2%, n=209) of respondents, considerably less than for pre-schoolers. It was primarily to enable them to work.

| **46. Select your top 3 reasons for using formal childcare. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Enables me to work** | |  | | --- | |  | | **94.81%** | **201** |
| 2 | Gives me a break | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.25% | 9 |
| 3 | Provides a stimulating environment for my child | |  | | --- | |  | | 21.23% | 45 |
| 4 | To gain support with my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.89% | 4 |
| 5 | I don’t have access to any informal childcare (family and friends) | |  | | --- | |  | | 32.08% | 68 |
| 6 | My child enjoys going | |  | | --- | |  | | 33.96% | 72 |
| 7 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.19% | 11 |
|  | | | answered | 212 |
| skipped | 1050 |

**Top 3 reasons for using formal childcare (Q46):**

1. **Enables me to work** (95%)
2. My child enjoys going (34%)
3. I don’t have access to any informal childcare (32%)

| **47. What type of formal childcare setting(s) do you use for all your school aged children? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Breakfast club** | |  | | --- | |  | | **54.90%** | **112** |
| 2 | **After school club** | |  | | --- | |  | | **61.27%** | **125** |
| 3 | Holiday club | |  | | --- | |  | | 28.92% | 59 |
| 4 | **Childminder – Provide childcare in their own home** | |  | | --- | |  | | **34.31%** | **70** |
| 5 | Nanny or au pair – Provide childcare in your own home | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.43% | 7 |
|  | | | answered | 204 |
| skipped | 1058 |

| **48. Select your top 3 reasons for choosing this type of childcare. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **It is attached to the school my child/children attend** | |  | | --- | |  | | **57.07%** | **117** |
| 2 | Price | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.49% | 42 |
| 3 | Sibling already attending | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.68% | 26 |
| 4 | Personal recommendation | |  | | --- | |  | | 21.95% | 45 |
| 5 | **Best meets my work (or other) needs** | |  | | --- | |  | | **67.32%** | **138** |
| 6 | Best meets my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.90% | 8 |
| 7 | Child’s choice | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.71% | 24 |
| 8 | **I had no other option** | |  | | --- | |  | | **28.78%** | **59** |
| 9 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.39% | 9 |
|  | | | answered | 205 |
| skipped | 1057 |

Top **reasons for selecting** these particular **settings**:

1. Best meets my work (or other) needs (67%)
2. It is attached to the school my child/children attend (57%)
3. I had no other option (29%)

Please note that the lack of wrap around care, i.e. breakfast and afternoon clubs, generally, as a response to Covid19 pandemic (i.e. some schools no longer providing wrap around care) and also their lack in rural areas has been brought up extensively in respondents’ comments in Q103 and Q104 – please see Section 53 for further detail.

This also applies to scarcity of holiday clubs.

Cost of these childcare arrangements was also mentioned frequently.

| **49. Does any of your school aged children attend more than one type of formal childcare, e.g. breakfast club AND childminder?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 22.49% | 47 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 77.51% | 162 |
|  | | | answered | 209 |
| skipped | 1053 |

#### 25. School aged children: Using more than one type of formal childcare

**23%** (n=47) **attended more than one setting** (vs. 10% of pre-schoolers). This was driven by the need for both term time and in holiday provision (50%), work (or other) patterns (46%) and one setting not covering all the hours needed (44%).

Some respondents need cover particularly for early morning and late afternoon hours.

Respondents’ comments (Section 53; Q103 and Q104) indicated that in the absence of wrap around care, this tends to be provided by childminders, who can sometimes also accommodate parents’ particular requirements in terms of hours.

| **50. Select your top 3 reasons why your child/children attend more than one setting. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Works best around my work (or other) pattern** | |  | | --- | |  | | **45.83%** | **22** |
| 2 | One setting alone does not cover all the days I need | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.67% | 8 |
| 3 | **One setting alone does not cover all the hours I need** | |  | | --- | |  | | **43.75%** | **21** |
| 4 | I need more flexible wrap-around care | |  | | --- | |  | | 27.08% | 13 |
| 5 | **I need both term time and in holiday provision** | |  | | --- | |  | | **50.00%** | **24** |
| 6 | I wanted variety for my child | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.50% | 6 |
| 7 | One of the settings is better at supporting my child’s additional needs or disabilities |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 8 | It works out cheaper to use more than one provider | |  | | --- | |  | | 8.33% | 4 |
|  | | | answered | 48 |
| skipped | 1214 |

#### 26. School aged children: Not using any childcare

| **51. What are your top 3 reasons for not using any childcare? [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **I don’t need childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **64.85%** | **238** |
| 2 | **I prefer to look after my child myself** | |  | | --- | |  | | **34.06%** | **125** |
| 3 | My child is old enough to look after himself/herself | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.81% | 36 |
| 4 | I don’t know how to find childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.82% | 3 |
| 5 | I could not find childcare that met my work (or other) needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.81% | 25 |
| 6 | I could not find childcare that met my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.27% | 12 |
| 7 | I could not to find childcare that my child’s other needs (e.g. food intolerance, need for a quieter environment) | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.09% | 4 |
| 8 | I could not to find childcare in a location suitable to my needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.27% | 12 |
| 9 | **I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **21.80%** | **80** |
| 10 | I could not access a place at my preferred childcare setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.45% | 9 |
| 11 | Our usual childcare setting is still closed due to Covid-19 | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.91% | 7 |
| 12 | I am concerned about Covid-19 so not using childcare at the moment. | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.90% | 18 |
|  | | | answered | 367 |
| skipped | 895 |

**Top 3 reasons for not using any childcare (Q51):**

1. I don’t need childcare (65%)
2. I prefer to look after my child myself (34%)
3. I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare (22%)

Respondents living as couples selecting these options were either both working, or had one person working. Both working and non-working lone parents were represented.

#### 27. School aged children: Informal childcare

Just **under a third** of parents of both school-aged and pre-school children used informal childcare, provided overwhelmingly by **grandparents** (95.3% for pre-schoolers and 89.7% for school-aged children). The reasons were the same for both groups. The **combination of no cost and child being with family members**, to the enjoyment of both parties, appeared to be the main driver.

| **52. Who provides informal childcare for your school aged child/children? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Grandparent | |  | | --- | |  | | 89.73% | 201 |
| 2 | Older sibling | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.13% | 7 |
| 3 | Another relative | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.50% | 28 |
| 4 | Friend or neighbour | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.98% | 47 |
| 5 | Other | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.46% | 10 |
|  | | | answered | 224 |
| skipped | 1038 |

| **53. Select your top 3 reasons for using informal childcare? [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **I prefer to keep my child with my family or friends** | |  | | --- | |  | | **46.43%** | **104** |
| 2 | I don’t know how to find formal childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.45% | 1 |
| 3 | **I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **32.59%** | **73** |
| 4 | **There is no cost for me** | |  | | --- | |  | | **54.46%** | **122** |
| 5 | I pay for informal childcare, but less than formal childcare would cost me | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.68% | 6 |
| 6 | I could not find formal childcare that met my work (or other) needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.30% | 41 |
| 7 | I could not find formal childcare that met my child’s additional needs or disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.34% | 3 |
| 8 | I could not to find formal childcare that met my child’s other needs (e.g. food intolerance, need for a quieter environment) | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.45% | 1 |
| 9 | A mix of formal and informal childcare is the best situation for us | |  | | --- | |  | | 22.77% | 51 |
| 10 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.50% | 28 |
|  | | | answered | 224 |
| skipped | 1038 |

**Top 4 reasons for using informal childcare (Q52):**

1. There is no cost to me (55%)
2. I prefer to keep my child with family or friends (47%)
3. I cannot afford the cost of formal childcare (33%)
4. A mix of formal and informal childcare is the best situation for us (23%)

Please note that the cost of childcare is brought up extensively in respondents’ comments in Q103 and Q104 (Section 53). Limitations in wrap around care also mean that informal childcare arrangements are sometimes in place out of necessity.

Some ‘other’ comments:

* *“One parent is a shift worker and one working at home 2 days a week so it's hard to find childcare that can be totally flexible.”*
* *“More flexibility provided by family/friends to help cover work commitments especially during school holidays.”*
* *“My mother in law and my children both adore it!”*
* *“Was hoping to use before and after school club but these are not on due to COVID.”*

#### 28. About your school aged child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND)

SEND was more prevalent among school-aged children (21%;n=159) than pre-schoolers (n=75). Only few parents of school-aged children were ‘unsure’ (n=12).

| **45. Do any of your school aged children have a special educational need or disability (SEND)? Your child does NOT need to have a formal diagnosis for you to answer ‘yes’ to this question.** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Yes** | |  | | --- | |  | | **19.81%** | **147** |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 78.57% | 583 |
| 3 | **Unsure** | |  | | --- | |  | | **1.62%** | **12** |
|  | | | answered | 742 |
| skipped | 520 |

| **54. Please select from the below the situations that apply to you. [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **My child has been formally diagnosed** | |  | | --- | |  | | **56.69%** | **89** |
| 2 | My child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) | |  | | --- | |  | | 22.29% | 35 |
| 3 | I suspect my child has a special educational need or disability | |  | | --- | |  | | 22.93% | 36 |
| 4 | Other people have suggested that my child has a special educational need or disability | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.75% | 31 |
| 5 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.75% | 31 |
|  | | | answered | 157 |
| skipped | 1105 |

**Formal diagnosis** was much more prevalent among **school-aged** children, mentioned by more than 56% of respondents, followed by child having SEND being suggested by others.

‘Other’ comments included: waiting for diagnosis, going through assessment, referral being in place or having a support plan in place.

| **55. Please describe your child’s special educational need or disability. If you have more than one pre-school child with a special educational need or disability, please tell us about all of them, or as much as you feel comfortable with.** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Open-Ended Question | 100.00% | 147 |
|  | | | |
|  | | answered | 147 |
| skipped | 1115 |

The most frequently mentioned conditions were (Q55):

* **ASD** (autism) – diagnosed (n=55) and suspected (n=30)
* **ADHD** – 40 children
* **Sensory processing disorder -** 22 children
* **Dyslexia** – 18 children
* **Anxiety** disorder – 14 children
* Around 10 children had each of the following: Global developmental delay, other learning difficulty, speech, language and communication needs or a form of a physical disability.

Almost half of children had one condition only, but almost a third had two conditions. The rest had three conditions or more.

| **56. Is the need/disability you described above something that your child needs additional support with, to make it possible for him/her to access formal childcare?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 43.31% | 68 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 56.69% | 89 |
|  | | | answered | 157 |
| skipped | 1105 |

#### 29. Receiving support for your school aged child's additional needs or disabilities (SEND)

| **57. Has your child received the support needed to enable him/her to access formal childcare?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 40.32% | 25 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 59.68% | 37 |
|  | | | answered | 62 |
| skipped | 1200 |

**Less than half** (43%; n=68) of respondents stated that their child **needed additional support** to make it possible to attend childcare.

From these, **more than half** (60%) have **not received** this support (*vs. 69% of pre-schoolers who have*).

Only 16 comments were provided about the support that school-aged children have received that helped (Q58), the key one again being **one-to-one support** (n=7). Other comments were specific to children’s individual needs.

**Support school-aged children need but have not received** (27 comments) (Q59):

A quarter of respondents complained of not having any support.

Again, there is need for **one-to-one support**, some children need quieter environment.

Several respondents mentioned the prohibitive cost of specialist childcare.

Some comments included:

* *“Covid and the pandemic stopped everything, we were just about to get help.”*
* *“After school club at former nursery - they have worked with and supported her since a baby and know her triggers. Because of the additional support she requires and that they no longer receive funding for additional staff to support her, they can only take her for one day a week when they have fewest children in. They also take her for two mornings for breakfast club.”*
* *“My child needs a structured routine and personal space as well as staff who understand his needs and personality. We have not found support in our area which is suitable and within our budget.”*
* *“School doesn't get funding to support her needs as a family we have had to pay for aids and support for her learning.”*

#### 30. Communication with childcare setting about additional needs or disabilities (SEND)

On the whole, **most** parents whose children have SEND and attend a formal childcare setting felt that their **child received the level of support that they needed** for their development.

Formal settings looking after school-aged children were less likely to raise a concern about child's development.

*Please note small sample sizes.*

* 84% (n=32) felt that their **child received** the level of **support** that they need for their development.
* 71% (n=27) **regularly received information** from their childcare setting about their child’s development.
* 82% (n=31) stated that their childcare setting had **not raised concerns** about their child’s development with them.

| **60. Has the childcare setting raised concerns about your child’s development with you?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.42% | 7 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 81.58% | 31 |
|  | | | answered | 38 |
| skipped | 1224 |

| **61. Do you feel that your child receives the level of support for their development that they need?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 84.21% | 32 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.79% | 6 |
|  | | | answered | 38 |
| skipped | 1224 |

| **62. Does the childcare setting regularly share information with you about your child’s development?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 71.05% | 27 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 28.95% | 11 |
|  | | | answered | 38 |
| skipped | 1224 |

#### 34. Childcare experience during Covid-19 lockdown (23 March 2020 – 29 May 2020)

| **66. Are you or your partner a ‘key worker’, and/or a parent of a vulnerable child or a child with special education needs or disabilities?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 55.66% | 408 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 44.34% | 325 |
|  | | | answered | 733 |
| skipped | 529 |

| **67. Did your child/children continue to attend a formal childcare setting through the lockdown period (23 March 2020 – 29 May 2020)?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.89% | 78 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 81.11% | 335 |
|  | | | answered | 413 |
| skipped | 849 |

From the 408 respondents (or their partners) (56%) who were ‘key workers’ and/or parents of a vulnerable child or a child with SEND, only **19%** (n=79) continued to **use formal childcare during** the first **lockdown**. Most of these attended their usual setting either based on the same pattern as before the lockdown, or with a reduced frequency.

Formal childcare settings **met** the majority’s **needs during lockdown** (92%, n=70).

#### 37. Attended childcare during Covid-19 lockdown

| **69. Which of the statements below best describes your child/children’s attendance pattern during lockdown?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Attended the usual setting based on the same pattern as before the lockdown** | |  | | --- | |  | | **37.97%** | **30** |
| 2 | **Attended the usual setting but with a reduced frequency** | |  | | --- | |  | | **36.71%** | **29** |
| 3 | Attended the usual setting but with an increased frequency | |  | | --- | |  | | 7.59% | 6 |
| 4 | Attended a different setting, as the usual one closed over lockdown | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.46% | 13 |
| 5 | Attended a different setting, as I was dissatisfied with how the usual setting dealt with lockdown | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.27% | 1 |
|  | | | answered | 79 |
| skipped | 1183 |

| **70. Overall, did the formal childcare you used during lockdown meet your needs?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 92.11% | 70 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 7.89% | 6 |
|  | | | answered | 76 |
| skipped | 1186 |

#### 36. Not attending childcare during Covid-19 lockdown

| **68. Why did your child/children not attend formal childcare through the lockdown?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | The usual setting remained open, but I decided to keep child/children at home | |  | | --- | |  | | 49.24% | 161 |
| 2 | The usual setting remained open, but I was dissatisfied with how it dealt with lockdown, so I kept child/children at home | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.92% | 3 |
| 3 | The usual setting closed during lockdown | |  | | --- | |  | | 49.85% | 163 |
|  | | | answered | 327 |
| skipped | 935 |

**81%** (n=335) **did not use formal childcare during lockdown**, for the reasons below.

#### 38. Return to childcare after Covid-19 lockdown

Responses indicate no particular destabilisation of the formal childcare market as a result of the coronavirus lockdown.

| **71. After 1 June 2020, have your child/children returned to the childcare setting they attended before lockdown?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Yes** | |  | | --- | |  | | **78.65%** | **571** |
| 2 | No – The setting has not re-opened | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.48% | 18 |
| 3 | No – I have decided for my child/children not to return | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.79% | 13 |
| 4 | No – The usual setting no longer meets our needs | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.83% | 6 |
| 5 | No – I changed the childcare setting for my child/children as a result of Covid-19 and prefer the new setting. | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.93% | 14 |
| 6 | No – I changed the childcare setting for my child/ children as a result of Covid-19; child stayed at new setting as I wanted to avoid further disruptions to my child's childcare arrangements | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.41% | 3 |
| 7 | No – I changed the childcare setting for my child/ children as I was dissatisfied with how setting dealt with lockdown; child stayed at new setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.41% | 3 |
| 8 | No – Childcare no longer needed due to my (or partner’s) change in employment circumstances, e.g. redundancy, change in working hours | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.07% | 15 |
| 9 | No - Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.43% | 83 |
|  | | | answered | 726 |
| skipped | 536 |

**Majority** (79%; n=571) of ‘keyworker’ children **returned to their formal childcare** setting after 1 June 2020.

From those who had not, this was because the setting had not re-opened, parents’ working pattern had changed or parents preferred the new setting they found during lockdown. Some children had transitioned to school or parents delayed their return to childcare until September 2020.

For most (71%; n=518), **childcare needs had not changed** as a result of the lockdown either.

#### 39. Your childcare needs following Covid-19 lockdown

| **72. Have your childcare needs changed as a result of Covid-19 lockdown? If so, how? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **No, my needs have not changed** | |  | | --- | |  | | **71.45%** | **518** |
| 2 | Yes – I need less hours of childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.10% | 66 |
| 3 | Yes – I need less days of childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.76% | 20 |
| 4 | Yes – I need more hours of childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 7.72% | 56 |
| 5 | Yes – I need more days of childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.28% | 31 |
| 6 | Yes – I need the same amount of childcare but on different days / covering different hours | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.17% | 23 |
| 7 | Yes – I need childcare in a different location now | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.07% | 15 |
| 8 | Yes – I no longer need childcare | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.66% | 12 |
| 9 | Yes – My child is now only attending one setting because of the current government guidance | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.79% | 13 |
| 10 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.45% | 25 |
|  | | | answered | 725 |
| skipped | 537 |

Specific ways respondents’ childcare **needs changed** (approx. 200) were mostly around the **hours of childcare** needed – 9% needed less hours, 8% needed more hours.

Some comments include:

* *“I am vulnerable so to reduce contact with other families I have withdrawn my child from childcare settings.”*
* *“One childcare bubble means we can only use one set of grandparents. I work in London and cannot get home for school pick ups/drop offs.”*
* *“For the whole time that we are working from home we will continue to use reduced childcare to save costs but when/if we go back to the office then we will go back to using all the childcare that we used previously.”*
* *“Hours have been upped whilst we are in ‘lockdown’. He needs social engagement with other children, so once the soft play, zoos etc. are open again, these additional hours will stop.”*

#### 40. Changes in your childcare needs following Covid-19

| **73. Select your top 3 reasons why your childcare needs changed. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **I work the same number of hours but in a different pattern (e.g. flexible hours or starting work earlier and finishing earlier)** | |  | | --- | |  | | **24.27%** | **50** |
| 2 | Reduction to my working hours | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.68% | 22 |
| 3 | Increase to my working hours | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.50% | 34 |
| 4 | **I am not able to use family for childcare** | |  | | --- | |  | | **30.58%** | **63** |
| 5 | I am no longer working / I have been made redundant | |  | | --- | |  | | 7.28% | 15 |
| 6 | **I am working from home** | |  | | --- | |  | | **41.26%** | **85** |
| 7 | Our regular childcare setting has closed | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.91% | 6 |
| 8 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.39% | 42 |
|  | | | answered | 206 |
| skipped | 1056 |

For those whose **needs had changed** (approx. 200 households), the **top 3 reasons ‘why’ were** (Q73):

1. Working from home (41%; n=85)
2. Not being able to use family for childcare (31%; n=63)
3. Working the same number of hours, but in a different pattern (24%; n=50)

Remaining reasons were also mainly related to changes in individuals’ working patterns and tended to be very specific to individual families’ circumstances.

| **74. Can you indicate whether these changes in your childcare needs may be temporary or permanent, bearing in mind the unpredictability of the current situation?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Temporary | |  | | --- | |  | | 31.55% | 65 |
| 2 | Permanent | |  | | --- | |  | | 31.55% | 65 |
| 3 | I don't know | |  | | --- | |  | | 36.89% | 76 |
|  | | | answered | 206 |
| skipped | 1056 |

Views on how long these changes in childcare needs may last for were split almost equally.

#### 41. Getting ready for school

Around **44%** of respondents (n=516) had a recent experience of their children starting in a Reception class, or are getting ready for starting school in September 2021.

48% of parents of pre-school children using formal childcare stated they used formal childcare to help their child get ready for school.

| **75. Have any of your children recently started at primary school (Sept 2019, Sept 2020), or starting school next year (Sept 2021)?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 58.58% | 686 |
| 2 | No – my child was due to start in Sept 2020, but this has been delayed | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.17% | 2 |
| 3 | Yes – started in Sept 2019 | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.25% | 120 |
| 4 | Yes – started in Sept 2020 | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.54% | 182 |
| 5 | Yes – planned start in Sept 2021 | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.27% | 214 |
|  | | | answered | 1171 |
| skipped | 91 |

#### 42. Delayed start to school

| **76. Why was your child’s entry to school delayed? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | I was advised by the early years setting to delay | |  | | --- | |  | | 50.00% | 1 |
| 2 | I was advised by the school to delay |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | I was advised by another professional to delay | |  | | --- | |  | | 50.00% | 1 |
| 4 | I was not happy with the transition arrangements for my child |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 5 | I did not think my child was ready to start school | |  | | --- | |  | | 50.00% | 1 |
| 6 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 50.00% | 1 |
|  | | | answered | 2 |
| skipped | 1260 |

#### 43. Children who have started school recently (2019 and 2020)

| **77. How confident were you about your child starting school?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.15% | 9 |
| 2 | Not confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.94% | 17 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.43% | 47 |
| 4 | **Confident** | |  | | --- | |  | | **45.10%** | **129** |
| 5 | Very confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 29.37% | 84 |
|  | | | answered | 286 |
| skipped | 976 |

**Three quarters** (n=213) of parents felt either **confident** or very confident about their child starting school in Sept 2019 or 2020 – this included the pandemic period.

**66%** (n=138) feel **confident** or very confident about **Sept 2021** start.

| **78. How would you generally rate your experience of your child starting school?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Very poor | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.35% | 1 |
| 2 | Poor | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.18% | 12 |
| 3 | Average | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.76% | 28 |
| 4 | Good | |  | | --- | |  | | 39.72% | 114 |
| 5 | **Excellent** | |  | | --- | |  | | **45.99%** | **132** |
|  | | | answered | 287 |
| skipped | 975 |

**Majority** (86%; n=246) had either an **excellent or good experience** of starting school, despite some children experiencing this under coronavirus conditions.

Parents complemented schools on the extra effort they made to help children settle into the school environment and keep parents informed. **Good communication received from schools** prior to starting was **key** to the overall positive experience, including virtual tours, videos and Zoom calls; some schools held socially distanced face-to-face events. Some schools adopted staggered starts, others did not – either seemed to work well for parents and children; most could see the benefit of either approach. Parents felt that adequate safety measures have been put into place, teachers were welcoming and friendly.

Some comments include:

* *“The setting has made a massive effort to make everything as safe as possible ensuring children don't miss out on much needed fun and interaction with peers.”*
* *“School tried really hard to still provide a transition into school for children (with doorstep visits) and for parents (with online meetings and calls). School staff have been so nurturing and seemed very prepared for any possible difficulties after such a long gap from education.”*

**Negative experiences** were caused mostly by **poor communication** from the school, making parents and children feel unprepared. Staggered starts were viewed as inconvenient for working parents.

An example of a negative comment:

* *“A longer transition period than they would have had in previous years and no childcare to help which made it difficult with work.”*

| **83. If your child was born in the Summer term (born between 1 Apr - 31 Aug), did you have any specific concerns about them starting school?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | My child was not born in the Summer term | |  | | --- | |  | | 46.83% | 118 |
| 2 | No concerns | |  | | --- | |  | | 32.94% | 83 |
| 3 | Yes, some concerns (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.24% | 51 |
|  | | | answered | 252 |
| skipped | 1010 |

Among both pre-school and school-aged children, those born in the Spring term were the least represented. Combined, **almost 40%** of children were **Summer born**.

From the respondents whose children had started school recently (n=252), just over half (53%; n=134) stated their child was born in the Summer term. **Over a third** of these (38%; n=51) **had some** specific **concerns** about their child being Summer born and starting school. The rest had no concerns.

Most frequently, respondents shared a **general concern over their child being younger than the other**, especially Autumn born children and being emotionally and developmentally ready for school. This was sometimes combined with having had a limited time at an EY setting, due to their actual age, or due to the Covid lockdown.

*\*Full wording of themes above:*

* *As Summer born, being younger than other children in the class*
* *Having the social skills needed - being developmentally and emotionally ready for school*
* *More time spent at home (or less time at EY setting) due to Covid*

Some respondents’ comments:

* *“I was worried as her time at nursery was very short compared to my other child’s. I could not afford for her to attend nursery until she was 3 and then she missed so much time there due to COVID.”*
* *“He is so young. Due to his age he only got 1 year at preschool whereas others get 2 to prepare. Seems very unfair to the younger ones.”*
* *“He was deferred 1 year, he started school age 5. My concerns last year were around toilet training and speech.”*
* *“Being that bit younger, I thought she may struggled but she has proved me wrong. She's loving school.”*
* *“Just turning 4 and starting two weeks later. More around emotional development and being in a class of 30 having been at a small pre school and having time at home. She did really well though.”*
* *“Very young and with the additional SEN barriers I was and still am worried about how he can make himself understood with his peers and teachers.”*
* *“My younger child is 18/08 birthday, so very young in the school year, and I was (and still am) concerned about her tiredness levels.”*
* *“Born 30 August and notably behind on skills and maturity to older children in his year group.”*

#### 46. Children starting school next year (2021)

| **86. How confident are you about your child starting school in September 2021?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.83% | 8 |
| 2 | Not confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.09% | 19 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 21.05% | 44 |
| 4 | **Confident** | |  | | --- | |  | | **46.41%** | **97** |
| 5 | Very confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.62% | 41 |
|  | | | answered | 209 |
| skipped | 1053 |

**66%** (n=138) feel **confident** or very confident about **Sept 2021** start.

#### Parents’ information needs around getting ready for school

**Q82: What information or support would you have found helpful to get your child more ‘ready for school’?** (parents whose children had already started school)

N = 97

Some respondents’ comments:

* *“A few more collaborative sessions before actually starting but understand due to COVID it was not possible. To have more time on a weekly basis to discuss who your child is integrating and coping with school life.”*
* *“What to expect, what to do, what to organise, what she needed to be ready to prepare her, especially with such a big gap from a childcare setting due to COVID.”*
* *“This year was tricky as none of the usual things were in place, we were at least able to meet the teacher before we started which was good. I think packs of work or type of things expected them to learn would be useful before they start so they know what to expect.”*
* *“I literally got one letter in the post and that was it. My child was not at all ready for school. I would have liked something for children who may have more trouble adjusting to the change. Also, something relating to helping children affected by lockdown who are starting school.”*
* *“Earlier practical support and guidance i.e. the year before rather than a few months, so there's time to work on things.”*
* *“Covid put a stop to everything but maybe organised play dates with other kids as my daughter didn’t know any other children starting her school.”*
* *“Books. Talking about it. Encouraging independence at home and reading through school readiness pack from health visitors.”*
* *“Better communication from local authority on the process. Parents no longer receive letters about applying. As a first-time parent searching for a school is a minefield and doesn't help us prepare the children. More information from nurseries/ playschools to the children in explaining what is coming.”*

**Q87: What information or support would help you to get your child prepared for starting school?** (parents of September 2021 starters)

N=100

Some respondents’ comments:

* *“Due to covid restrictions, the usual school tours not available to help decide on application. Worry that usual induction sessions may be affected.”*
* *“To find out if we are allowed to visit schools. I feel I will be applying to put him somewhere I've never seen and neither has he.”*
* *“Curriculum outline. Expectations of what pupils should be able to do by the time they start school. Being able to see the schools or at least basic information about each one.”*
* *“It has been incredibly difficult to not have the option of looking around schools. It feels like making an incredibly important decision, blind. I was lucky enough to look round one school and it was managed very safely. I have no idea why others couldn't have done the same.”*
* *“A list of what he is expected to be capable of - Physically e.g. wiping bum, changing clothes, mark marking and grip - Mentally e.g. sitting still, listening and focus.”*
* *“We have received no contact from Essex council regarding enrolment. We are considering holding him back for a 2022 start but are unsure where to find support in this regard.”*
* *“I received nothing on the school application process or any brochures from the local schools. I had to research this myself. Which isn’t a problem but would have been nice to be written to officially explaining how to apply for schools.”*
* *“Settling in days, buddy system. My child has found it hard settling back into nursery after lockdown so the more we can do to get him familiar with the school setting the better!”*

#### 44 and 45. Your views on school readiness resources

Awareness, and thus usage, of ECC ‘starting school’ resources was low.

| **81. Have you used of any of the following resources, developed to help children get better prepared for school?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes** | **No** | **I have never heard of it** | **Response Total** |
| TLC (Talk, Listen, Cuddle) ‘Going to school’ resources | 12.8% (37) | 31.1% (90) | 56.1% (162) | 289 |
| School Readiness workshops organised by the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Family Hubs) | 9.0% (26) | 46.0% (133) | 45.0% (130) | 289 |
|  | | | answered | 289 |
| skipped | 973 |

**More than half** of respondents whose children had started school in 2019 or 2020 have **never heard of TLC** resources. 45% had never heard of the School Readiness workshops which indicates that slightly more were aware of them but had not taken then up.

From the approximate 30 users of either resource, majority found the resources ‘**helpful**’ (61% TLC; 69% workshop) or ‘very helpful’.

| **84. How helpful was the information provided by TLC in getting your child ready for school?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Very helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 23.68% | 9 |
| 2 | Helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 60.53% | 23 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.16% | 5 |
| 4 | Not helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.63% | 1 |
| 5 | Not at all helpful |  | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | | | answered | 38 |
| skipped | 1224 |

| **85. How helpful was the information provided by the School Readiness workshop in getting your child ready for school?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Very helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.23% | 5 |
| 2 | Helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 69.23% | 18 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.54% | 3 |
| 4 | Not helpful |  | 0.00% | 0 |
| 5 | Not at all helpful |  | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | | | answered | 26 |
| skipped | 1236 |

#### 47. Information, advice and guidance around child development and learning

| **88. Select which best describes how you feel about supporting your child’s learning while at home.** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.06% | 46 |
| 2 | Not confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 11.57% | 131 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.64% | 177 |
| 4 | **Confident** | |  | | --- | |  | | **50.62%** | **573** |
| 5 | Very confident | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.11% | 205 |
|  | | | answered | 1132 |
| skipped | 130 |

Over **two thirds** of respondents (69%; n=778) felt either **confident** or very confident at supporting their children’s learning while at home.

They don’t tend to use ‘official’ sources of information and rely on general Google search, family, school and friends instead.

| **89. Select your top 3 sources that you go to for information about child development. [tick up to 3 options]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Family** | |  | | --- | |  | | **34.37%** | **388** |
| 2 | **Friends** | |  | | --- | |  | | **30.56%** | **345** |
| 3 | Childcare provider | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.75% | 223 |
| 4 | **School** | |  | | --- | |  | | **32.95%** | **372** |
| 5 | **Internet – general google search** | |  | | --- | |  | | **40.92%** | **462** |
| 6 | Internet – parenting websites and message boards | |  | | --- | |  | | 29.94% | 338 |
| 7 | Local authority / Family Information Service / Library | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.10% | 35 |
| 8 | Social media – Twitter, Facebook, other | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.64% | 154 |
| 9 | Parenting and other apps | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.57% | 108 |
| 10 | TV | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.13% | 24 |
| 11 | Parenting classes or groups | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.67% | 64 |
| 12 | Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Family Hubs across Essex, health visitors etc.) | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.94% | 180 |
| 13 | Voluntary sector groups (e.g. parent and toddler groups) | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.99% | 45 |
| 14 | Books | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.19% | 228 |
| 15 | GP surgery / other medical provider | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.39% | 106 |
| 16 | Employer | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.86% | 21 |
| 17 | Social worker / support worker | |  | | --- | |  | | 0.71% | 8 |
| 18 | Homestart / Families in Focus and similar support groups | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.13% | 24 |
| 19 | None of these | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.57% | 29 |
|  | | | answered | 1129 |
| skipped | 133 |

**Q90: Please list up to 3 examples of topics about child development, learning or care that you have looked for and could not find useful or clear information on.**

The most frequent topics that parents struggled to find useful or clear information on were:

* 1. Speech, language and communication
  2. Sleep advice
  3. Developmental milestones – what should children be able to do at different ages
  4. Children’s emotional development and wellbeing, including mental health
  5. Toilet training
  6. Supporting learning at home in general (with some specifically referring to reading, writing, phonics and maths)
  7. Health related information
  8. Eating, food and nutrition advice
  9. Starting school – expectations for children starting Reception class

Some respondents’ comments:

* ***Behaviour****: “Behaviour issues following marital breakdown/when sibling arrives/after starting school.”*
* ***Physical development/movemen****t: “Feet turning in while walking.”*
* ***Starting school****: “General expectations for reception year. Specific info e.g. EYFS says need to be able to read by going to school but not exactly how much they need to read.”*
* ***Eating****: “I stopped breastfeeding my son at 15 months. It isn't clear if he HAD to have cows milk or just usual solids diet as lots of info is based on formula feeding.”*
* ***Eating****: “Children with difficulties with eating and drinking.”*
* ***Sleep****: “Nightmares/night terrors.”*
* ***Supporting learning at home****: “Age appropriate learning I.e. what I should be teaching them depending on their age.”*
* ***Supporting learning at home****: “Accessible primary school level curriculum frameworks that could easily be read and understood by someone not in the teaching profession.”*
* *“Essex Council website not clear on information to help with childcare.”*
* *“Up-to-date recommendations for apps to support child's development.”*
* *“Easing of social impact on child moving between houses.”*

#### 48. and 49. Awareness of and accessing the Essex Family Information Service

**Family Information Service** is largely **unused**. Only 9% (n=106) have used it.

From the 9% of respondents who have used FIS, this was for a range of information, **with information on FEEE2, 3, 4** and **TLC** resources being the most frequent, each sought by around a third of respondents.

Information was mostly ‘**helpful**’ (55%), followed by ‘very helpful’ (18%) and ‘unsure’ (17%).

Most (62%) found it ‘**clear**’, further 13% ‘very clear’, but 16% were ‘unsure’.

| **91. Have you used the Essex Family Information Service? (Please note this is different to the Family Hubs provided by the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service.)** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 9.46% | 106 |
| 2 | **No** | |  | | --- | |  | | **54.73%** | **613** |
| 3 | I have never heard of it | |  | | --- | |  | | 35.80% | 401 |
|  | | | answered | 1120 |
| skipped | 142 |

| **92. What have you used the Family Information Service for? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Finding a childcare provider | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.57% | 18 |
| 2 | **Information on the Free Early Years Entitlement for 2, 3- and 4-year olds** | |  | | --- | |  | | **32.61%** | **30** |
| 3 | Information on the Extended funding entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.22% | 14 |
| 4 | Family finance | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.26% | 3 |
| 5 | **Plan and learning for children – TLC (Talk, Listen, Cuddle) site** | |  | | --- | |  | | **30.43%** | **28** |
| 6 | Special Education Needs and disabilities | |  | | --- | |  | | 14.13% | 13 |
| 7 | Short breaks for disabled children | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.17% | 2 |
| 8 | **Information I wanted was not available** | |  | | --- | |  | | **21.74%** | **20** |
|  | | | answered | 92 |
| skipped | 1170 |

| **93. How helpful was the information provided?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Very helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 18.09% | 17 |
| 2 | **Helpful** | |  | | --- | |  | | **55.32%** | **52** |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 17.02% | 16 |
| 4 | Not helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.38% | 6 |
| 5 | Not at all helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 3.19% | 3 |
|  | | | answered | 94 |
| skipped | 1168 |

| **94. How clear was the information provided?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all clear | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.15% | 2 |
| 2 | Not clear | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.45% | 6 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 16.13% | 15 |
| 4 | **Clear** | |  | | --- | |  | | **62.37%** | **58** |
| 5 | Very clear | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.90% | 12 |
|  | | | answered | 93 |
| skipped | 1169 |

A handful of comments on what is missing from FIS was provided (n=19) (Q95).

**Mental health** information, for both parents and children, was the only topic mentioned more than once (4 comments).

Others were individual comments, some of which are shared here:

* *“Support for separated parents, only one parent is considered.”*
* *“Ease of use prevented me from using the site successfully, so the information I wanted may have been there.”*
* *“The family information service run a great service. The problem comes from the confusion of the governments tax credits for families.”*
* *“It is very difficult to know what information is available to access. After babies reach their 1st birthday it seems that nobody really tells you what help is available.”*

For a better indication of parents’ information needs, see responses to Q90.

#### 50. and 51. Awareness of and Accessing the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Family Hubs)

**Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service** has been used by almost half of respondents (n=524), mostly for their **health visiting services** (83%) and parenting support (37%). People have also attended baby playgroups, baby self-weigh sessions, speech and language drop-ins and sought speech and language referrals.

Note that Health Visitors tend to proactively contact new parents, which may explain the higher usage compared to other ECC early years services. Still, over a third of respondents have not used the service.

524 respondents have used the service. While **most** (61%; n=312) found the service ‘**helpful**’, some comments were provided about how the service could be **improved, highlighting important limitations of the service.**

| **96. Have you used the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Family Hubs)? (It provides a range of free child and family services throughout Essex, including health visiting, parenting support, school nursing, family health and others. It is delivered in multiple locations across Essex, including Family Hubs, Delivery Sites and in the community.)** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Yes | |  | | --- | |  | | 47.16% | 524 |
| 2 | No | |  | | --- | |  | | 35.10% | 390 |
| 3 | I have never heard of it | |  | | --- | |  | | 17.73% | 197 |
|  | | | answered | 1111 |
| skipped | 151 |

| **97. What have you used the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service for? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **Health Visiting: e.g. antenatal contact, transition to parenthood, new baby review, maternal mental health, wellbeing and development of children under 1 year and 2-3-year reviews, support to ‘be ready for school’** | |  | | --- | |  | | **83.37%** | **431** |
| 2 | **Parenting Support: e.g. breastfeeding support, weaning toilet training, school entry review and childcare confidence support** | |  | | --- | |  | | **36.94%** | **191** |
| 3 | School Nursing: e.g. support for young people in schools with wellbeing and health concerns, Chat Health an online support service | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.03% | 26 |
| 4 | Family Health: e.g. substance misuse, contraception advice, nutrition support, mental health (maternal & infant), smoking cessation | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.71% | 14 |
| 5 | Support for ages 5-19: e.g. dental care, review of immunisation status, support with any physical, emotional or developmental problems, provides children, parents and school staff with information on specific health issues, measuring height and weight | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.64% | 24 |
| 6 | Support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25 | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.51% | 13 |
| 7 | Children’s community health services in West Essex | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.22% | 27 |
| 8 | Virtual support or online sessions during the Covid19 pandemic | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.84% | 25 |
| 9 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.44% | 54 |
|  | | | answered | 517 |
| skipped | 745 |

| **98. How helpful was the service you received?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.74% | 9 |
| 2 | Not helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.62% | 29 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.27% | 53 |
| 4 | **Helpful** | |  | | --- | |  | | **60.47%** | **312** |
| 5 | Very helpful | |  | | --- | |  | | 21.90% | 113 |
|  | | | answered | 516 |
| skipped | 746 |
| If you have found the service 'not helpful' or 'not at all helpful': How could the service be improved? (59) | | | | |

Respondents who did not think the service provided by the ECFWS was helpful were asked for suggestions on how the service could be improved. Around 50 comments were provided, which represents around 10% of those who had used the service.

In addition to this, ECFWS, as well as the health visiting service that sits within it, was brough up frequently in comments at the end of the survey (Q103 and Q104; Section 53).

In order to provide as full account of respondents’ views on the ECFWS, these comments were added to the original 50 and themed in greater detail to capture their content more accurately (in Q103 and Q104, they would have been themed as ‘ECFWS/Family Hubs’ and ‘health visitors’ only).

Note that feedback was sought primarily from those who were not satisfied with the service they received – this covers about half of the comments. The remaining comments were not prompted in such a way and these did include compliments, too. Still, the comments are skewed towards negative feedback.

*To get a more balanced view, other sources of information should be used in addition to this. Putting this into perspective, over 80% of those who used the service still found it ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’.*

Care was taken to connect individual’s comments together to avoid double counting. Therefore, each comment represents a view of a single individual.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q98 - ECFWS comments** | **Freq** | **% of comments** |
| Health visiting - no continuation | 45 | 40.9% |
| Parent/baby groups - more needed, valued | 31 | 28.2% |
| Limited support received overall | 29 | 26.4% |
| Covid impact on service - limited service, no face to face, no groups | 28 | 25.5% |
| Compliment | 25 | 22.7% |
| Communication issues / lack of follow-up; comms about the service; comms within service | 23 | 20.9% |
| Limited/Conflicting/outdated information | 17 | 15.5% |
| Family Hub locations | 15 | 13.6% |
| Breastfeeding support - inadequate | 13 | 11.8% |
| Unfriendly/rude/judgemental staff | 10 | 9.1% |
| Baby weighing | 9 | 8.2% |
| Child reviews (lack of) | 9 | 8.2% |
| Sessions for parents - topic suggestions | 9 | 8.2% |
| Post-natal depression | 8 | 7.3% |
| Virgin - unhappy with this provider | 8 | 7.3% |
| Timings of sessions not for working parents | 5 | 4.5% |
| Support of parents with more than one child | 5 | 4.5% |
| Causes pressure on parents | 3 | 2.7% |
| Nurse service - needs more resource | 2 | 1.8% |
| Childcare information needs | 2 | 1.8% |
| Referrals to GP - inadequate | 2 | 1.8% |
| **Total comments (i.e. respondents)** | **110** |  |

**Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service** has been used by almost half of respondents (n=524), mostly for their **health visiting services** (83%). Therefore, unsurprisingly, most comments referred to the health visiting services.

While the service is valued, respondents have had varied experiences. The issues mentioned included:

* Difficulties in accessing support – in relation to accessing health visitors, and other support, e.g. when weighing clinics happen. Website should be kept up to date with ‘more useful’ content. Once respondents managed to access the service, they tended to be satisfied.
* Service seen as ‘disjointed’ and ‘inconsistent’ by some – this included lack of follow up (proactive in terms of checking up on new mums, as well as reactive in terms of returning calls) and lack of continuity (not seeing the same health visitor).
* Health visitors’ attitude – while health visitors have often been described in positive terms, some were apparently ‘rude’ and ‘judgemental’.
* Some health visitors considered to give outdated information, or information that is not always correct.
* Need for greater connections between education and health, e.g. between EY settings / school nurse and health visitors.
* Some parents have a preference for support groups, especially breastfeeding, to be provided by professionals (i.e. health visitors or midwives) rather than mother volunteers. Experiences have been mixed. Some have received excellent support where e.g. tongue tie was identified; other times this was not the case, resulting in mothers giving up breastfeeding.
* Impact of Covid – while parents are generally conscious of the constraints posed by the ongoing situation, many feel the health visiting services has not been adequate over the period and especially new parents have been left to cope with difficult situations on their own (see section below for more detail).

|  |
| --- |
| **Health visitors:**   * *“I felt there was a* ***big difference between the support available to me after I had my first daughter (2015) compared to after having my younger daughter (2017)****. I found it very* ***difficult to access any support more recently****. In particular the* ***breastfeeding support*** *was different as* ***previously provided by health visitors*** *compared to more recently being* ***provided by other mothers*** *which for me was not comparable. All health visitors and early years support I have accessed has been absolutely incredible, their knowledge and experience has been invaluable to me and second to none. I can't speak highly enough of the individuals. However, I have found it incredibly difficult to reach/access those people or to find out what clinics are available etc. It is only through my sheer blood mindedness at times that I have managed to get the help I have needed when I needed it and it is a huge worry to me that for families the 0-3 year period can be so intense at times that if they are struggling and* ***can't find out quickly and easily what help is available*** *that those families and children will really struggle. The childcare provision through local schools and nurseries is, in my experience absolutely fantastic. They have carried on providing the best learning environments for our children in the most challenging of times - I thank them regularly but it doesn't seem enough for everything they have done this year.”* * *“I felt like I didn’t get support in the early days when I was struggling. I went to my health visitors and* ***they just directed me to websites*** *to access which isn’t what I was looking for. I also didn’t receive any support when I couldn’t breastfeed so I just gave up.”* * *“The health visitor stood 6ft away from my front door in a mask asking me about my traumatic childbirth during lockdown with no regard to privacy.* ***Total failure to support me postpartum****. I’ve had to buy weighing scales to keep track of my newborns development. The service may as well not exist. I had to stop breastfeeding because there was zero!! Support for mums this year. I’ve had an awful postpartum experience.”* * *“Health visiting very useful. Wellbeing team for older primary school mental health needs really only* ***offers signposting rather than actual support*** *with mental health needs.”* * *“The* ***information provided online is very poor****. Social media channels post some information but it tends to just be reposting posters or timetables for virtual sessions. There is very little ‘useful’ content. It’s also* ***really hard to navigate****. Today I wanted to find out about booking a weigh in session for my daughter. I had to scroll through dozens of social media posts just to find out how to access this. The service’s website is out of date and has even less information. I would expect this to be so much better especially as the health visiting service has been virtually non-existent during the pandemic. It’s so hard to get any support. As a first time mum with a diagnosed mental health condition, I really feel this lack of support and crucially basic information has had a hugely negative impact on my well-being and that of my family. I’ve felt very isolated and lonely during that time. While I appreciate the* ***pandemic has played a huge part in this, there has been time to come up with alternative ways to support families*** *and this has been poor.”* * *“More support for Post Natal Depression, I was told (incorrectly) by HV my child would taken away if I suffered with mental health after birth. This stopped me reaching out for help when I needed it.”* * *“****Returned calls when parents ask for help or advice****. Any advice at all on toddler years such as toilet training, fussy eating, helping child learn big emotions. Any information at all on nursery/preschool/ school system. The health visitor team are supposed to guide/support a new parent (at least that is what I understand their job to be). However, I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve seen someone even after 2 children. Those times were for routine weight checks and nothing further. More information or advice on everything up to school age would be beneficial to those who need/want it. The internet isn't always a reliable source.”* * *“With my first child I found the service so valuable 4 years ago. However with my second child who is now 22 months, I’ve found it completely useless.* ***I was told I couldn’t join the new mum classes because I was a second time mum****, the HV service had changed and the usual weigh in clinic was with a nursery nurse and not the HV and was a* ***weigh the baby yourself. I felt completely unsupported****.* ***As a second time mum I went through things like tongue tie, colic, severe allergies that I didn’t experience the first time*** *as well as my husband struggling to bond with second baby. For the tongue tie my HV told me to buy different bottles and didn’t give me any time or support. She instantly fed better once it was cut. I was also told as a second time mum my appointments with the HV would be over the phone and they wouldn’t come out. This was pre COVID! I had a history of post natal depression and yet I was left to get on with everything on my own. I did hit rock bottom again and I sought support elsewhere.”* * *“Follow up never happens, they reduced and moved the health visitors so not as available anymore. If a health visitor suggests a doctor to look at the child due to issues/concerns at check ups I feel that it* ***should be done as a referral by the health visitor rather than for the parent to have to try and sort this out with the GP****.”* * *“Mothers are abandoned after a month.* ***A phone call every two weeks for the first three months might prevent problems such as PND from escalating****. Not every mother knows she has got post-natal depression, and especially not every mother recognises it within her first fortnight of having a child. Giving her a checklist to score her own mental health comes across as callous, dehumanising and unrealistic. There are ways of asking those questions tactfully in a face-to-face appointment, and repeating them every few weeks for the first few months to ensure that when it does arise, PND is caught. Post-natal depression, breastfeeding and other issues are all hot topics with relation to attachment and child development. It is very important that a baby's needs are prioritised and provided for if they are to thrive. But the mother's needs matter too, as without a healthy, happy mother, the baby will not progress, and so I would argue that health visitors need to be taught to consider their language use more. When a woman becomes a mother, health professionals stop asking how she is doing, and giving her suggestions for looking after herself, as everything becomes about the baby. That's an enormous transition for any woman and I believe HVs should be more sensitive and consider mother and baby as a unit.”* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Health visitor compliments:**   * *“Antenatal and post natal care is of vital importance to the health and well being of new mothers and babies. I had severe post natal depression and anxiety and the* ***support provided by my health visitor was a lifeline to me****. The peer support from my antenatal group continues to this day (child is now 7). The family hubs are an invaluable source of support and information to new parents and foster a sense of community through rhyme time in the libraries providing much needed structure and reassurance, as well as an opportunity to meet other parents.”* * *“The hubs/health visitors provide excellent support. I really struggled with my transition to being a parent.* ***The health visitor who provided me with breastfeeding support weekly, was also a great support emotionally****. I had a difficult birth. This was followed by the hub staff running the local stay and plays, supporting me both emotionally and providing a safe, interesting environment for us both at no cost. We have also been signposted by them to charities who have provided us with food/clothing too when needed, no questions asked.”* |

**Need for more parent/baby groups**

Various support groups and courses are highly valued for their content, but mostly the social aspect for the babies/children and parents to meet other parents. Those respondents reflecting on courses attended in the past (including pre-pandemic) were generally complimentary, stating that that’s where they met some of their current parent friends, with these friendships being long-lasting. Many respondents now feel disappointed they can no longer access these, either because of ‘reduction’ in these groups (i.e. less groups in ‘local settings’), or because of them not running at all due to Covid. Many respondents have described their recent experience as ‘lonely’ and ‘isolating’.

Some respondents would also like more specialised groups, such as for those with children with SEND, parents experiencing PND, or groups running on weekends, to allow working parents to attend, too.

Same issue has been brought up extensively in open ended comments to Q103 and Q104 (Section 53).

Q101 shows that almost half of respondents (47%, n=507) got to know their parent friends through various baby/parent, toddler and other groups, supporting these comments with more quantitative evidence. In comparison, private and voluntary antenatal classes (e.g. NCT) as a source of getting to know other parents were mentioned only by 25% (n=272) of respondents. Equally, ECC could further encourage these networking opportunities by ‘providing more classes/courses/groups (67%)’ and ‘providing more open access/free to use spaces (47%)’.

|  |
| --- |
| * *“****More Informal groups*** *at children’s centres* ***needed*** *as those of us not needing support and intervention have just been left.”* * *“Reopen the children’s centres! They were a lifeline for me with my first child. I didn’t know anybody with a baby and* ***making friends in the beginning was amazing*** *for me and my child. I genuinely don’t know what I would have done without them. So many groups we used to be able to go to and can no longer do that with my younger children. Even if you paid an entrance fee it would be great for so many families.”* * *“When my son was born we* ***attended weekly classes run by Essex in local libraries*** *(baby sensory, storytime, music and baby massage),* ***this was my lifeline while struggling with PND****. Since being passed over to Virgin Care, with multiple redundancies and cut backs, these no longer exist. I could not have afforded to pay for these classes and so would not have had the opportunity to get support for myself or my son or make the friends that I now have. Conflicting information and not easy enough to access for working parents. Calls are not returned etc.”* * *“I think that* ***during lockdown for a new parent there should have been groups set up on Facebook / social media****. Zoom sessions as there were times it was* ***very lonely****. Fortunately I had a friend whose baby is a few months older and it was her third but without her I would have found it very very hard.”* * *“I really value the family hubs and* ***feel for mums who have missed out. The baby groups are invaluable****. They help the children try new things and learn to socialise and get the parents out of the house and enable them to discuss things that worry them but they think are too minor or silly to mention to a healthcare provider. My eldest is 9 now and the friendships we made in those first few weeks are still part of both our lives, as are the friends I made when my 4 yo was a baby. Due to covid I haven't been able to do much at all with my 4 month old. I feel far more isolated but am lucky I already have parenting experience and mum friends to chat with or WhatsApp if I'm unsure or worried. Other parents aren't so lucky. Bring back baby groups at centres like the Meadows and the Treehouse in Harlow.”* * *“Some classes/groups are difficult to access due to popularity or funding. For example can never get booked into baby time class as fully booked. Got onto baby massage class attended once, class cancelled for 2 weeks attended again then cancelled completely was meant to be a 6 week course.”* |

**Limited support overall**

Around 3 in 10 respondents felt that the service they have received has generally been limited, for the following reasons:

* Respondents comparing how the service may have changed in the time between having their first and other children, reflecting on what they accessed then and now, with a ‘noticeable’ decrease now.
* Some second time parents not being considered as needing the support
* Impact of Covid on services – limited health visiting service, no baby/parent and other support groups, which allow parents to meet other parents and develop their own support networks.
* Some Family Hubs closing in more remote locations. These were key for those living in villages with limited transport options.

|  |
| --- |
| * *“Up until the pandemic I would say* ***support was there for those who knew where to find it****.”* * *“Post birth there are a few support centers for weigh ins etc, and there are* ***some free classes you can attend (if you know about them, there is space*** *etc). Then there seems to be* ***nothing until the child starts pre-school****, but again little support is offered about attending/choosing a pre-school. I had to chase and chase and chase for my child’s 2 year old check, which happened when she was 3!”* * *“It was fantastic when my child had just been born.* ***There were some great classes*** *on sleep, weaning, play, baby massage that were so helpful for a new, unsure mum. Very supportive with home visits when I was diagnosed with depression. When it moved to Virgin Care the* ***level of support noticeably dropped****. I had to contact them for 1 year review and still waiting to have the 2-2.5 year review. When I contact them it feels they are understaffed.”* |

**Types of sessions attended and valued**

Respondents have either attended, or would welcome more of the following sessions:

* Sensory play ideas
* Weaning and fussy eating
* Baby massage
* Baby first aid
* Toilet training
* Breastfeeding support staff also being knowledgeable about formula feeding
* Big emotions in children
* Child mental health - how parents can support them
* Information on nursery/pre-school/school system
* More information for parents with SEND, especially around speech and language
* Support for parents of school-aged children/older children
* Groups for fathers and babies

**Communication issues / lack of follow-up; comms about the service; comms within service**

Some of the communication issues raised included:

* Promotion of the service in general
* Lack of follow-up / phone calls not being returned
* Respondents not knowing what services are available
* Information about what is available (e.g. calendar of events) needs to be provided in an ‘obvious place’ – website, rather than relying on Facebook
* Accessibility of service in terms of locations - difficult for those living in more rural areas
* No contact since the beginning of Covid lockdown in March 2020

|  |
| --- |
| * *“I* ***registered*** *for an online parenting* ***course*** *during covid but* ***never received the information*** *through to join online. Registered over the phone for a toddler course.”* * *“I had* ***never heard of the Family Hub whilst pregnant*** *(I found out from my health visitor post birth), so I think it would be good to reach out more to pregnant women. I would have done some of the pre natal classes if I’d have known about the service.”* * *“Although it was a while ago, I requested a* ***referral to podiatrist via health visitor****. HV said it was done, heard nothing so chased it with HV who said they were having a problem with referrals not being sent off. Only then did she say she couldn’t do it and to contact GP -* ***would have been nice to have been told that nothing was going to come of the referral****.”* |

**Impact of Covid on services**

As alluded to through many of the other themes, Covid has had a considerable impact on respondents’ experiences of the services received. This has been felt the most acutely by those becoming new parents since March 2020, those with limited support networks (e.g. without family living close by) and those experiencing mental health issues (e.g. post-natal depression). Covid has negatively impacted on communication, face to face contact between health visitors, parents and children, baby/parent and other support groups and opportunities for breastfeeding support and baby weighing.

|  |
| --- |
| ***Covid impact:***   * *“****Neither of my children have seen a professional in 8 months****. My baby was born in March 2020 and has never seen a health visitor. My 2 year old hasn't had his 2 year check. Health visitors should make sure families are not slipping through the cracks. If baby and toddler groups are not allowed to run parents of preschool children need something else for their children to be able to have social interaction with other people, otherwise they have nothing.”* * *“I had my baby during lockdown (April 2020) and have not seen a health visitor face to face. I have not had any information on when weigh in's have started (she has not been weighed). I am just lucky this was my second child as I felt more confident but I would say if this was my first I would really have struggled with the lack of contact and support. Sad that they* ***were not able to start up covid friendly stay and plays/groups for parents to meet other parents****.”* * *“Really a lack of support with covid. I am a health care professional and my work team haven't stopped seeing patients. I can’t understand why babies aren’t being seen by health visitors. Children NEED to be physically seen by a HCP.* ***A telephone call is not sufficient to assess a child****. I have serious* ***concerns there are many safeguarding issues not being addressed in many families****, new mums with PND, children with speech problems or mobility issues. I fear my son's generation will grow up to have lifelong issues from covid.”* * *“It is such a shame that there are* ***no face to face baby groups running through the family hu****bs I have enquired numerous times and had no response! Yes we are in a pandemic* ***however the government have said baby groups can go ahead*** *( so why not in Essex?) it is unfair on babies and new mums who may need support, friendship etc to stop loneliness, PND etc if* ***private companies can run them****?! I just feel very let down! It really is not easy or practical to do a virtual session with a baby!!!”* |

#### 52. Knowing other parents

| **99. How important has it been to you to get to know other parents who have children of a similar age?** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Not at all important | |  | | --- | |  | | 2.48% | 27 |
| 2 | Not important | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.37% | 113 |
| 3 | Unsure | |  | | --- | |  | | 10.46% | 114 |
| 4 | **Important** | |  | | --- | |  | | **38.26%** | **417** |
| 5 | **Very important** | |  | | --- | |  | | **38.44%** | **419** |
|  | | | answered | 1090 |
| skipped | 172 |

More than **three quarters** of respondents stated it was either ‘very important’ or ‘important’ to know other parents who have children of a similar age.

| **101. How have you (and your partner, if applicable) got to know other parents? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | Antenatal classes or courses – private or voluntary sector provider (e.g. NCT) | |  | | --- | |  | | 25.40% | 272 |
| 2 | Post-birth classes or courses – private or voluntary sector provider | |  | | --- | |  | | 12.42% | 133 |
| 3 | Antenatal classes or courses – Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service | |  | | --- | |  | | 6.54% | 70 |
| 4 | Post-birth classes or courses – Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service | |  | | --- | |  | | 8.87% | 95 |
| 5 | **Playgroups, parent and toddler groups** | |  | | --- | |  | | **47.34%** | **507** |
| 6 | Met in the community e.g. libraries or parks | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.05% | 204 |
| 7 | Introduced by professional | |  | | --- | |  | | 1.59% | 17 |
| 8 | Social media | |  | | --- | |  | | 13.82% | 148 |
| 9 | Through formal childcare setting | |  | | --- | |  | | 20.45% | 219 |
| 10 | **Through the school** | |  | | --- | |  | | **44.26%** | **474** |
| 11 | **I knew people already** | |  | | --- | |  | | **35.85%** | **384** |
| 12 | **Through other friends / work** | |  | | --- | |  | | **34.08%** | **365** |
| 13 | I don’t know any other parents | |  | | --- | |  | | 7.47% | 80 |
|  | | | answered | 1071 |
| skipped | 191 |

Parents have **met other parents in a combination of ways**, the most frequent ones being:

1. **Playgroups, parent and toddler groups** (47%)
2. Through the school (44%) (+ 20% through formal childcare)
3. I knew people already (36%)
4. Through other friends / work (34%)

| **102. How could Essex County Council best support parents to get to know each other? [tick all that apply]** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **Response Percent** | **Response Total** |
| 1 | **More classes / courses / groups** | |  | | --- | |  | | **67.36%** | **708** |
| 2 | More open access spaces / free to use spaces | |  | | --- | |  | | 46.53% | 489 |
| 3 | More social media groups, apps etc. | |  | | --- | |  | | 24.07% | 253 |
| 4 | Facilitated meetings by professionals | |  | | --- | |  | | 19.60% | 206 |
| 5 | Nothing more is needed | |  | | --- | |  | | 4.76% | 50 |
| 6 | I don't know | |  | | --- | |  | | 15.51% | 163 |
| 7 | Other (please specify): | |  | | --- | |  | | 5.80% | 61 |
|  | | | answered | 1051 |
| skipped | 211 |

**ECC** could further **encourage** this by:

1. Providing more classes/courses/groups (67%)
2. Providing more open access/free to use spaces (47%)

**Q100: Main benefits and drawbacks of knowing other parents**

Over 800 respondents listed what they liked and disliked about knowing other parents. Given the number of comments, most respondents provided very similar opinions.

**Benefits** (n=826):

* Having a support network - sharing experiences, ideas, going through the same things at the same time, having someone to talk to
* Social interaction and friendships – for children and parents

Example quotes:

* *“Sharing milestones and advice with people going through the same things at the same time. It is a lifeline which can do wonders for support.”*
* *“Shared experiences make situations easier to deal with and the children have close friends, outside of school friends, for life.”*

**Drawbacks** (n=658):

* Comparisons between children
* Competitive rather than supportive parents
* Feeling judged
* Lack of other parents’ understanding of certain conditions
* *Many mentioned no drawbacks*

Example quotes:

* *“Opinions of others expecting you to do as they do.”*
* *“Comparison, even if not conscious.”*

#### 53. Open ended comments

**Q103: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience or childcare needs, to inform the Childcare sufficiency audit, which aims to map the supply and demand of existing childcare in Essex?**

**Q104: Is there anything specific you feel we should include in the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2021 - 2026?**

Each comment was coded against a list of themes and could cover multiple themes, therefore the frequencies do not add up to the total number of comments.

The same list of themes was used for both questions – childcare sufficiency and items relevant for the strategy are closely intertwined and respondents’ comments showed that the same themes were often relevant for both. Some additional themes were added where appropriate.

Each question received around 290 comments, which means that around a fifth of respondents provided a further comment to each question.

Around 170 respondents provided a comment for both questions 103 and 104. While this represents about a 60% ‘overlap’ in terms of actual individuals, respondents raised separate points in each question. Therefore, there was very little repetition and it was possible to **add up the theme frequencies from both questions to provide an aggregate of the general feelings of the survey respondents**.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Q103 - Childcare sufficiency comments** | **Q104 - EY&C strategy comments** | **Combined freq (Q103+Q104)** |
| Working parents support | 56 | 39 | **95** |
| Childcare cost - impact on family | 51 | 15 | **66** |
| Support for parents (incl. mental health) | 50 | 33 | **83** |
| Wrap-around care (breakfast, after school) | 46 | 25 | **71** |
| Children's centres/Family Hubs | 39 | 11 | **50** |
| FEEE/EE - start of eligibility, cost implications | 35 | 34 | **69** |
| Toddler/community groups/clubs | 34 | 28 | **62** |
| Provision worse/limited than elsewhere, limitations in an area | 29 | 15 | **44** |
| Limited childcare options/difficult to find childcare | 23 |  | **23** |
| Childminder | 21 | 5 | **26** |
| Flexibility of childcare - Longer hours needed (e.g. 7am-6.30pm), shift pattern | 22 |  | **22** |
| Covid impact on childcare/other provision, incl. health policies and rules at settings | 22 |  | **22** |
| Health visitors | 21 | 13 | **34** |
| SEND - Better/earlier SEND support/intervention for children | 20 | 19 | **39** |
| Holiday childcare | 13 | 12 | **25** |
| Broader system | 13 | 12 | **25** |
| FEEE - other comments (incl. FEEE funding rates not covering settings' own costs) | 11 | 18 | **29** |
| Childcare IAG | 11 | 7 | **18** |
| SEND - Better SEND IAG/training for childcare staff | 10 | 9 | **19** |
| Children's mental health (incl. impact of Covid19) | 9 |  | **9** |
| Other | 9 | 17 | **26** |
| IAG | 9 | 15 | **24** |
| Compliments for particular settings | 8 |  | **8** |
| Older children support/provision | 8 |  | **8** |
| Breastfeeding support | 7 | 8 | **15** |
| Flexibility of childcare - term time only provision needed | 6 | 5 | **11** |
| SEND - Better SEND IAG for parents | 6 | 11 | **17** |
| Single parent support | 4 | 3 | **7** |
| More outdoor encouragement/physical activities | 3 | 9 | **12** |
| Importance of FEEE/EE - keep | 2 | 8 | **10** |
| C19 - Support for young children post Covid, to avoid long term impacts (+parents) | | 22 | **22** |
| Funding for EY - more |  | 17 | **17** |
| Transition to school - info |  | 15 | **15** |
| Structured vs. play-based learning, content of learning | | 14 | **14** |
| Funding - other |  | 8 | **8** |
| Better communication with parents | | 9 | **9** |
| Developmental/learning milestones at EY - clear info for parents | | 6 | **6** |
| Maintained nurseries funding - guaranteed | | 5 | **5** |
| Info on deferring school start for summer borns | | 4 | **4** |
| School children - supporting their learning at home - info | | 3 |  |
| **Total theme frequency** | **598** | **474** | **1072** |
| **Total number of comments** | **289** | **280** | **569** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q103 theme**  **Q103: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience or childcare needs, to inform the Childcare sufficiency audit, which aims to map the supply and demand of existing childcare in Essex?** | **Frequency** | **% of total**  **comments (n=289)** |
| Working parents support | 56 | 19% |
| Childcare cost - impact on family | 51 | 18% |
| Support for parents (incl. mental health) | 50 | 17% |
| Wrap-around care (breakfast, after school) | 46 | 16% |
| ECFWS/Family Hubs | 39 | 13% |
| FEEE/EE - start of eligibility, cost implications | 35 | 12% |
| Toddler/community groups/clubs | 34 | 12% |
| Provision worse/limited than elsewhere, limitations in an area | 29 | 10% |
| Limited childcare options/difficult to find childcare | 23 | 8% |
| Flexibility of childcare - Longer hours needed (e.g. 7am-6.30pm), shift pattern | 22 | 8% |
| Covid impact on childcare/other provision, incl. health policies and rules at settings | 22 | 8% |
| Childminder | 21 | 7% |
| Health visitors | 21 | 7% |
| SEND - Better/earlier SEND support/intervention for children | 20 | 7% |
| Holiday childcare | 13 | 4% |
| Broader system | 13 | 4% |
| FEEE - other comments (incl. FEEE funding rates not covering settings' own costs) | 11 | 4% |
| Childcare IAG | 11 | 4% |
| SEND - Better SEND IAG/training for childcare staff | 10 | 3% |
| Children's mental health (incl. impact of Covid19) | 9 | 3% |
| Other | 9 | 3% |
| IAG | 9 | 3% |
| Compliments for particular settings | 8 | 3% |
| Older children support/provision | 8 | 3% |
| Breastfeeding support | 7 | 2% |
| Flexibility of childcare - term time only provision needed | 6 | 2% |
| SEND - Better SEND IAG for parents | 6 | 2% |
| Single parent support | 4 | 1% |
| More outdoor encouragement/physical activities | 3 | 1% |
| Importance of FEEE/EE - keep | 2 | 1% |
| **Total comments** | **289** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Q104 theme**  **Q104: Is there anything specific you feel we should include in the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2021 - 2026?** | **Frequency** | **% of total**  **comments (n=280)** |
| Working parents support | 39 | 14% |
| FEEE/EE - start of eligibility (should be earlier), cost implications | 34 | 12% |
| Support for parents (incl. mental health) | 33 | 12% |
| Toddler/community groups/clubs | 28 | 10% |
| Wrap-around care (breakfast, afters school) | 25 | 9% |
| C19 - Support for young children post Covid, to avoid long term impacts (+parents) | 22 | 8% |
| SEND - Better/earlier SEND support/intervention for children | 19 | 7% |
| FEEE - other comments (incl. FEEE funding rates not covering settings' own costs) | 18 | 6% |
| Funding for EY - more | 17 | 6% |
| Other | 17 | 6% |
| Childcare cost - impact on family | 15 | 5% |
| Transition to school - info | 15 | 5% |
| Provision worse/limited than elsewhere, limitations in an area | 15 | 5% |
| IAG | 15 | 5% |
| Structured vs. play-based learning, content of learning | 14 | 5% |
| Health visitors | 13 | 5% |
| Holiday childcare | 12 | 4% |
| Broader system | 12 | 4% |
| SEND - Better SEND IAG for parents | 11 | 4% |
| ECFWS/Family Hubs - importance | 11 | 4% |
| More outdoor encouragement/physical activities | 9 | 3% |
| SEND - Better SEND IAG/training for childcare staff | 9 | 3% |
| Importance of FEEE/EE - keep | 8 | 3% |
| Funding - other | 8 | 3% |
| Better communication with parents | 8 | 3% |
| Breastfeeding support | 8 | 3% |
| Childcare IAG | 7 | 3% |
| Developmental/learning milestones at EY - clear info for parents | 6 | 2% |
| Flexibility of childcare (e.g. term time only options) | 5 | 2% |
| Maintained nurseries funding - guaranteed | 5 | 2% |
| Childminders - support for them | 5 | 2% |
| Info on deferring school start for summer borns | 4 | 1% |
| Single parent support | 3 | 1% |
| School children - supporting their learning at home - info | 3 | 1% |
| **Total comments** | **280** |  |

Note that many of the themes are closely intertwined.

Therefore, they are explored below in the following broader ‘theme sets’:

1. Childcare and support for working parents
2. Impact of the Covid pandemic on childcare
3. Support for parents; mental health support for parents and children
4. Support for children with SEND
5. Broader system
6. Getting ready for school – probably add to the other section
7. **Childcare and support for working parents**

The most frequently mentioned theme was around **support for working parents**.

Working parents talk of the struggles of balancing their work and childcare, which they often describe as ‘stressful’. This is often linked to:

* the hours offered by childcare settings not suitable for those working full-time
* actual availability of childcare - especially the lack of before and after school childcare, which has generally been limited, and even more so as a result of the coronavirus pandemic
* cost of childcare – this putting families’ incomes under considerable strain, in some cases outweighing the family’s income

Working parents need cover for an entire working day, i.e. at least 8am – 6pm. This is still not enough for those working earlier/later hours or shifts. Settings that offer childcare on half day basis, e.g. pre-schools, are challenging for these parents. Same applies to childcare for school-aged children, where parents need **wrap-around care such as breakfast and after school clubs. Holiday clubs** are also mentioned, but not as frequently as daily wrap-around care. This has multiple impacts on families: to cover the hours needed to enable employment, some parents rely on family arrangements, others need to change their working hours and some are actually ‘forced out of work’. Many mention the stress of trying to find suitable and affordable childcare, the need to rely on family or the stress of juggling a less than ideal situation.

**Cost of childcare** plays a crucial role in working parents’ perceptions of being ‘penalised’ for working and the existing financial support offered (i.e. FEEE/EE) being viewed as ‘unfair’. While working parents are often reliant on childcare to be able to work, many claim their income either leaves them very little spare cash, none at all, or childcare costing more than their income. Some dip into their savings, others actually go into debt. The issue is exacerbated when having multiple children. Some conclude it is not worth returning to work, although this is not seen as the preferred option, as working mothers (majority of respondents were female) value their careers, for professional as well as mental health reasons.

Some example comments below give a flavour of working parents’ feelings:

|  |
| --- |
| **Cost of childcare / impact on family finances:**   * *“We fall into the bracket that we* ***don't qualify for help with childcare****, but* ***don't earn enough to be able to afford it****.”* * *“Consider the* ***families living on one income at minimum wage*** *- they always seem to be overlooked. Just because one adult is working doesn't mean that income stretches very far.”* * *“As a hard working family with 3 children we have to rely on childcare in order to work and bring in an income. The cost of childcare is extortionate especially if you have multiple children. This needs to be looked at as most families are* ***working just to pay the childcare costs****.”* * *“The cost of childcare is ridiculous. A decent salary of around £35k would cover full time childcare costs (7am to 6pm) but give me £500 a month spare for bills etc. That’s exactly why a lot of Mums can’t go to work.* ***15 free hours from age 3 is great, but it’s too late****. By that point a Mum will have potentially been out of employment for 3 years before having childcare covered to enable her to return to work.”* * *“As a mother of three, with children across all age settings, I would say that childcare, or lack of, is preventing me from going to work. The only reason I cannot go to work and I rely solely on benefits and for far too long, because* ***childcare provision just does not exist for my 3 children****. There is no one who will take/ pick up a child to pre-school for 3 hours per day, every day. (…) There is no afterschool provision for my year 1 child. Or holidays clubs, - £80 per day for the two of them! Absolutely nothing for my 13 year old. I am stuck, stuck, stuck.”* * *“Childcare is too expensive for the average family.* ***Most private nurseries charge the difference in rates after 3 yrs funding starts as they say the government doesn't pay the current hourly rates****. Also what help exists for the average working family with no benefits for their children until age 3?? We struggle till our children reach age 12! And especially for the first 3yrs. The council also needs to run affordable holiday clubs as at around £40 a day, half terms and summer holidays are unbearable.”* * *“Not enough good affordable childcare. For people that work full time they need care all day. Not just for a couple of hours. When school age there needs to be more after school childcare that closes late.* ***It’s impossible to leave work at 5pm & travel to pick them up when it closes at 5:30****!* ***Holiday childcare*** *is non existent unless you have* ***£80 a day*** *to spend or unless they play football! There needs to be fun activities they can do that is affordable!”* * *“Provide childcare funding from 2 years. We both work yet cannot afford childcare. We’re not entitled to any benefits or financial support to enable our child to access nursery/preschool until he’s 3! In addition scrap the criteria where funding starts the term after their birthday. That means* ***some children can get 4 months extra childcare before school****. I.e. a Dec born child can access the funding in Jan but my child born 2 weeks later can’t until April yet both children will start school at the same time. We are having to juggle our shifts around our childcare and family’s’ availability which makes life more stressful.”* * *“Our childminder does not work school holidays (…) so family or friends will look after them for a few hours. Not all employers allow employees to work flexibly, so* ***all extra childcare comes down to me as mother. I am exhausted and struggling****. After childcare I earn £8-10 a day, we’re clinging on hoping that in just over a year’s time we will get our 3 year funding for our youngest child and we’ll not need to use savings to pay our bills anymore.”* |

**The Free Early Years Entitlement** was mentioned frequently in relation to support for working parents. While majority are grateful for the scheme, many disagree with the eligibility criteria and feel it should be universally accessible from an earlier age, i.e. that everyone should be entitled to FEEE from the age of 2 years regardless of their income/working situation. The length of time between the end of maternity leave and the start of the universal FEEE3 entitlement is viewed as too big a gap in which some mothers have already had to leave their jobs. While some view the current FEEE/EE criteria as helping those ‘who are at home already’, others point out that they may be working but be on a lower/average income, or be reliant on a single income, thus being in the same situation of not being able to afford formal childcare at all.

Further comments made in relation to FEEE/EE were about:

* The rules that e.g. nurseries put in place with regards to being able to use the entitlement (e.g. max of 6 hours per day; not allowing parents to use all the hours they are entitled to)
* Additional costs parents may be changed for food/snacks, other resources and additional hours. Thus, some commented that using the term ‘free’ in the title is misleading.
* Eligibility starting the term after the child’s birthday – some may very closely miss out and thus have a shorter period of time to benefit from EY education.
* Parents’ awareness that the FEEE/EE payment that EY settings receive is actually lower than what these settings normally change, having a wider impact on how the settings cover their costs, including staff wages. This was also raised as an issue by some respondents who also worked in the EY sector.

Overall, the comments point to a considerable discrepancy between parents’ perspectives on cost of childcare and its impact on families’ financial situations, and the experience of the EY settings. Parents feel that they are paying over the odds, while the EY systems is described as ‘underfunded’, with inadequate wages for EY staff.

Thus, greater clarity around FEEE/EE offered to all those involved would assist with greater understanding of the underlying issues.

|  |
| --- |
| **FEEE/EE comments:**   * *“In my experience with my eldest, the way the* ***nurseries have the autonomy to provide the 30 hours free childcare diminishes the financial support to working parents****, it reduces the effectiveness of the support that enables parents to return to work. For example, the hourly rate of a non FEEE placement is less than the hourly rate of a FEEE placement.* ***Nurseries are trying to make up the shortfall*** *as the subsidy from government is not great enough to cover the nurseries reduction in income.”* * *“Formal childcare needs to be open 7 to 6.30pm, take the* ***30hrs funding and allow you to use it over how ever many days you need*** *(some limit 6hrs per 12hr day...doesn’t help parent financially if only work 2 or 3 days but long hours. We had to move our child or incur continued costs which meant I was working an extra day just to pay fees).”* * *“I do believe that not offering free childcare until the term after a child turns 3 makes no sense when a child starts school the September before they turn 5. It would be more beneficial* ***if free childcare was offered starting the September before a child turns 3****. Having had 3 children 1 in September one in January and one in July. The amount of time my children will have at preschool before starting school is drastically different depending on the month they were born.”* * *“I would like the choice how to access my funded childcare. As it stands I get 30 hours free, when my son is 3 years old. It would benefit me and help me financially if I could have had 15 hours when he is 2 and 15 when he is 3 instead, rather than just a full 30 at the age of 3. I find it difficult to work, because childcare is more than my wages, and grandparents are still having to work so childcare is very limited. It makes me so angry that people on benefits get to access childcare from 2 years old, even though they do not go anywhere, whereas if you work and want to work, it's tough! It's as though you would prefer to keep people in poverty, rather than support families to succeed in life. Absolutely backwards!”* * *“Need more support for early years settings. We are massively underfunded,* ***parents demands for using the so called free entitlement and being given far too many options****. It needs to be streamlined.”* * *“As an early years provider the funding level needs to be raised.* ***The cleaners get paid more than my staff****.”* |

**Wrap around care, holiday care, flexibility of childcare**

Lack of sufficient **wrap-around care** has been brought up extensively, especially in Q103. This is felt more acutely by working parents, who struggle to cover their working hours when breakfast/before school clubs and after school clubs are limited or not available. Wrap-around care is one of the ways to support working parents who work 9-5, although extended hours would be welcome.

Respondents have listed the following issues:

* Need for more before and after school clubs in general
* Need to address the lack of wrap-around care in rural area
* Calls for all schools to have wrap-around care on site
* Need for a greater variety of these clubs, to aid greater stimulation for the children
* Some provision having stopped due to Covid and not being reintroduced
* Flexibility – some parents, especially shift workers, would welcome greater flexibility in terms of the days they use and subsequently pay for (pay as you go option)
* High cost, especially for holidays clubs
* Lack of wrap-around care being picked up by **childminders**, which are, however, still scarce or oversubscribed in certain areas. Comments regarding childminders in particular tend to be positive, as they can provide more flexible childcare solutions (mostly in terms of hours) than other settings.

The above issues cause either ongoing stress for parents, need for renegotiating their working hours or not working at all.

**Holiday clubs** were mentioned frequently, too, with similar issues as above. Their general lack and the hours they cover were the main points raised, as well as cost. Working parents prefer full day provision, as half day, or clubs finishing at 3pm do not coincide with their working hours. Similar issues are experienced by those using pre-schools, which operate on shorter hours than e.g. private nurseries.

**Flexibility** has already been referred to. As with all other childcare provision, a certain proportion of parents requires a degree of flexibility which would accommodate shift work/irregular hours/days; longer hours, and also flexibility around term-time provision. Especially those working in schools would like the option for term-time provision only.

Overall, some parents feel that there is lack of childcare for older children and with the insufficiencies in the various childcare types, they have **limited childcare options**. Some call for better information, advice and guidance around childcare – they would welcome more information about providers and their operating hours as well as advice on when to start thinking about childcare so that one manages to secure a space for their child. Some providers do not have an online presence (e.g. some pre-schools were mentioned), which means that parents need to call them up individually. More information on funding options would also be welcome. Childminders are highly valued.

|  |
| --- |
| **Wrap-around care comments:**   * *“We need more options for children of working parents when those children go to school - it is very difficult to understand what options are out there and suitable for your child. I work 9am- 5pm minimum and* ***I have no idea what we are going to do when our son finishes school at 3:30pm*** *come sept 2021.”* * *“Please cater more for parents who work longer hours such as 8am to 6.30pm and who need school holiday provision too. Most people get 5 weeks holiday a year only. I am not sure how parents are supposed to manage with term time only care.”* * *“There should be more thought given to wrap around childcare - both for term time and holiday. These should incorporate other clubs to give children the variety and stimulation they deserve. E.g.:* ***sports, computers, lego clubs*** *etc that you can use childcare vouchers for - essentially the need is for the care while people work.”* * *“Currently, I am only able to use childcare vouchers if the school is simply providing breakfast/after school snack, and not for anything more interesting/stimulating for my child to do.”* * *“How you can support working parents to access pre-school environments to help their children get ready for school,* ***without them having to reduce their working hours / take unpaid leave as a result of being unable to secure childcare between 3pm and 5/6pm*** *due to Ofsted child ratios.”* * *“Provision for reception class age is difficult as they are not 5 which a lot of holiday club won’t except. Full days are helpful. Part days are not.* ***Need more full day provision 1hr or 2hrs is not useful for pick up drop off and trying to work****.”* * *“We struggled to get wrap round care for before and after school. The school is 2 form intake but the* ***wrap around care*** *provider on site* ***has a waiting list before we were even allocated our school place****. We managed to find a childminder eventually but struggled when they gave notice after a year as preferred to take children who went to a closer school to their setting. We then struggled again to find a place. We did just in time as a childminder was taking on an assistant to expand. We are really happy with our childminder but it was very stressful that we didn't have options to choose between. My partner and I also both had to renegotiate our working hours as we couldn't get any breakfast club and we could only get 4 days after school.”* * *“The nursery my oldest son went to used to run before & after school care. We had planned on using this due to us not having any family around to help with care. Due to covid, this was stopped & will not be re-instated. We were very stressed trying to find an affordable alternative & somewhere our son would feel comfortable. We tried the only option we can afford which was XX which is linked to the school he goes to but they have no spaces for after school care. This has had a knock on effect to my working hours which hasn’t helped at all. We have thankfully been able to access them for holiday cover otherwise we’d struggle a lot given we have no family near.”* * *“I have 3 children and* ***have to cut my hours as after school care for 3 hours 4 days a week is unaffordable****. I am currently pregnant and it is* ***likely I will have to give up work*** *as childcare will be more than my wage which is a good wage and great flexibility but I can't justify going into debt to stay in work.”* * *“It was incredibly disappointing and frustrating that there were virtually* ***no formal council led childcare options for our 7 year old over the summer holidays****. Usually he would attend mini camps/city camps but these were only running for those 8 years and older. This meant we had no childcare for him apart from us taking (unpaid) leave from work and he missed out on socialising and activities that he usually benefits from greatly.”* * *“More flexible formal childcare would be welcomed. e.g. myself and my husband are both teachers so* ***only require term-time childcare****, but many day* ***nurseries do not offer this****. This seems detrimental as they lose out on lots of custom from school staff and could easily make up their numbers during school holidays as most offer holiday clubs.”* * *“It's incredibly difficult to access childcare to cover the hours after pre-school due to my daughter being below school age, and therefore included in childminder ratios. I want my daughter to go to a pre-school to build up her socialisation, yet I may have to return to a full time childminder provision. I am particularly frustrated by some of the decisions being taken in the name of risk management during the COVID climate. As an alternative to pre-school to ensure I have the childcare hours we really need, I have considered a day nursery. However these settings tend to be much* ***stricter on blended childcare due to COVID****. For example, I was advised by one day nursery that* ***I need to leave 48 hours between setting attendance; as a full time working parent this is completely unworkable****! Incidentally on querying whether I then consider moving my daughter on a full time basis I was advised they didn't have space for a full week. Many childminders have not re-opened since COVID - I am very limited in my options at the current time.”* * *“There is a huge lack of high quality extended hours childcare in our area (Great Dunmow), e.g Montessori or other similar provision. As working parents, we massively struggled to find childcare covering the working day (e.g. 8-6) that was of a good standard for our twins (now 4 years old). We are facing the same difficulty now finding suitable provision for our baby when I finish maternity leave. There are several shorter day provisions, 9-3, and only one that offers longer days (in our opinion overcrowded and in need of refurbishment) which we initially sent ours to. We then moved them to another provision out of area, but this was very poor and we pulled them out following lockdown. For an area that is well populated and growing in size, this is not sufficient to support working parents. We have since enrolled our twins in a shorter day preschool whilst I am on maternity leave, but will have to rely on friends, family, and leaving work early in order for them to continue there when I return to work, which is going to be a huge struggle. This is made every more difficult in the current climate.”* * *“Also offer term time only and full year as needed. Some locally only offer 2yrs plus care not ideal when have 2nd baby.”* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Childcare IAG for parents comments:**   * *“****Parents need to be sign posted early on****, as first time parents we had no idea how difficult it would be to get a full time place in a nursery. This resulted in a feeling of ‘settling’ for what was available rather than what we were 100% wanting/happy with.”* * *“As a new parent I would liked to have received more information on 2-3 year old funding,* ***should it not have been for a friend I would not have known this existed****.”* * *“It was difficult to find* ***preschools*** *as* ***many don't have web presence****. A guide of all local preschools and their rating would be very helpful when trying to find one.”* * *“Make support with* ***childcare funding more apparent and easy to find****. I know a lot of parents who don’t put their children in childcare as they don’t know the funding available (especially for under 2s through universal credit or tax credits).”* |

Other themes relevant to EY development and childcare mentioned included:

* Supporting physical activity of children; greater provision of outdoor play areas, both natural open space and playgrounds
* Better communication with parents, including personalised feedback and information on what is available
* From the couple of parents who commented on the educational aspects of EY provision, the views were split almost equally between those advocating for more play based activities and those thinking that more of a ‘learning’ and structured environment should be provided.

|  |
| --- |
| * *“Improvements of outdoor safe learning facilities for families I.e. pond dipping, bird watching, tree recognition, forest school type activities.”* * *“That practitioners who look after children in preschool don’t have so many rules to follow and can spend more time with children just playing. I see they have to follow Ofsted rules and paperwork.* ***Would be nice to see then put down paper and pens and not worry so much about observations****. Feel preschools should be about children building on confidence and schooling and teaching left to the schools.”* * *“A better education system to* ***support children with life skills*** *rather than tick box exercises that aid them in passing exams!!!!! - building resilience - well- being led rather than results – mindfulness.”* * *“Balance, it is vital all children have access to the same standard of education regardless of their postcode. Why are schools still scraping by with poor levels of education. Our children have the right to a decent education as much as anyone else. SEN help needs to be widely available and not just for those underachieving; all children should thrive at school and be pushed to meet their individual potentials not just hit minimum national standards. There needs to be more nurseries that are better regulated and higher standards and deliver proper early years development. There is a lot of changes that need to be made and it needs to start with the bare bones of providing good quality teaching in a safe environment then worry about everything else.”* |

1. **Impact of the Covid pandemic on childcare**

Inevitably, the Covid pandemic has had an impact on respondents’ childcare arrangements. Unwelcome changes include:

* Some settings’ interpretation of the governmental guidance, e.g. when a negative Covid test is needed
* Some settings changing their operating hours, e.g. opening later due to cleaning, with subsequent negative impact on parents’ working hours
* Some settings no longer running services they used to, e.g. after school club
* Difficulties in finding childcare for ‘new’ children, since visits are not always possible

|  |
| --- |
| * *“Unrealistic health guidance for young children during winter months i.e. whenever a child gets a common cold without a temperature (of which there are many), we have to continue to pay for childcare but child not allowed to go back to childcare until a negative covid test completed (based on 3 tests so far, average turnaround of 5 days).”* * *“Some nurseries did not allow children with SEN to attend during lockdown. For example, my child was not allowed to attend nursery during lockdown. This was the nurseries decision.”* * *“As a frontline NHS worker I know had my son started school we would have been stuck for childcare during the covid surge as the school he now attends refused to take children unless both parents were key workers. This would have meant he wouldn’t have been home schooled consistently as we both need to work and the NHS would have lost a lot of my hours. This needs to be looked at if there is another surge.”* * *“The lack of COVID-safe childcare and the delay in many formal childcare settings reopening following the first lockdown was understandable, but this put many families under considerable strain as their earning potential was reduced. Providers should be offered EPRR training (Health Emergency Preparedness, Resilience & Response) and support in drafting BCPs (business continuity plans) to minimise the impact of any future major incident on families.”* * *“Covid has had a huge effect on my childcare. I have had to reduce working hours as one child has started school (to facilitate school pick up as no after school clubs/childcare) and younger child can no longer go to my parents so childcare costs have doubled.”* |

1. **Support for parents; mental health support for parents and children**

Supporting parents was a key area of importance raised in both questions. This often overlapped with comments on the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Q98), which generally provides these services, and those about baby/toddler and other groups aimed at both children and parents. While some comments were general, many reflected on the negative impact of the Covid lockdown, which has meant a substantial reduction in face to face services.

The support that parents referred to could be split into:

* Antenatal and postnatal care – covering primarily the period of child’s first year of life
* More ongoing support – post age 1, and then school age into teenage years

Several respondents mentioned not being aware of the ECFWS when pregnant and that more could be done to reach out to pregnant women. Postnatally, the importance of regular checking of new mothers was mentioned, especially in terms of their mental health and post-natal depression in particular. Post-natal depression and the negative impact of women not being supported adequately have been raised as a key area of concern.

It is felt that since March 2020, support has especially lacked and those becoming first time parents in lockdown have been left to their own devices, often with limited support network, with an overall negative impact on the wellbeing of them and their babies. This is due to:

* Lack of health visitor appointments
* No baby weighing facilities
* No 1 year and 2 year checks
* No baby/parent, toddler and other groups, e.g. baby massage, where parents could meet other parents

While respondents are conscious of the **constraints introduced by Covid**, they feel that there are ways services could be delivered in a Covid-safe manner. They feel that babies’ and young children’s health cannot be adequately assessed over the phone and that some face to face visits are necessary. Parent support groups could be run virtually.

Respondents acutely feel the loss of **baby/parent groups**, especially those who became first time parents since March 2020. The groups were described as ‘invaluable’, for new parents to meet other parents of children of a similar age, having opportunities to get some information both from professionals and peers, have a reason to ‘get out of the house’ and last but not least, socialisation opportunities for the children. Same applies to the discontinuation of other groups, such as those run in local libraries (baby sensory, rhyme time). New parents have described their experience as lonely and isolating, where many of them have missed out on opportunities to create their own support networks. Many have commented on the variable quality of breastfeeding support. There was a preference for these groups to be run by professionals rather than volunteers. Some respondents have said they had given up breastfeeding due to inadequate support around this (often in Covid times).

Those who already have children and have another child in lockdown are able to cope better at this time due to their previous experience and established support networks, but they are very conscious of how difficult this time must be for first time parents.

In terms of baby/toddler/parent groups in general (not related to Covid), respondents have stated the following:

* Groups suitable for parents with multiple children (i.e. baby AND toddler group)
* Groups also being run on weekends, to enable working parents and fathers to attend
* Specific support groups, e.g. for single parents, those with children with SEND, mental health (post-natal depression), breastfeeding groups run by a professional rather than a volunteer, speech and language support
* Preference for groups to be run in local communities, as travel can be challenging
* Having a professional on hand.

Q101 showed that almost half of respondents (47%, n=507) got to know their parent friends through various baby/parent, toddler and other groups, supporting the importance of this theme with more quantitative evidence. In comparison, private and voluntary antenatal classes (e.g. NCT) as a source of getting to know other parents were mentioned only by 25% (n=272) of respondents. Equally, ECC could further encourage these networking opportunities by ‘providing more classes/courses/groups (67%)’ and ‘providing more open access/free to use spaces (47%)’.

Additionally, many respondents are conscious of the limited social contact their children have had over the past year due to Covid restrictions (and possible self isolation), and the potential longer term impacts on their social and emotional skills, school readiness, anxiety and mental health. They call for more support to be put in place to assist with this and address mental health especially. It is seen as a key area to be included in the EY and Childcare strategy.

Finally, some respondents mentioned the difficulties of finding information, advice and guidance and what is available and how it can be accessed. This rings true with the content of other comments, as some of the services that respondents raised as not being available, in fact, are running at least virtually. The ECFWS provides support up to the age of 19, and a health visitor can be reached via telephone in working hours. Still, it appears that a large proportion of parents, including those who are not first time or new parents, are not aware of this.

|  |
| --- |
| * *“****Neither of my children have seen a professional in 8 months****. My baby was born in March and has never seen a health visitor. My 2 year old hasn't has his 2 year check.”* * *“Cancelling classes and support during lock down and during enhanced restrictions is a mistake.* ***Surely*** *there can be* ***some services still offered as covid secure*** *that would enable isolated and first time families to meet others.* ***Isolation and exclusion from support and social meet ups is so debilitating*** *and depressing for many.”* * *“Parents need support and training to enable them to support their children whilst mental health services are so poorly funded. The* ***key challenge for many parents is the mental well-being of their child****. Helping parents to understand the importance of emotional resilience and how to develop and nurture it would go a long way in helping to raise mentally strong adults who need less mental health support. Think of it as preventative maintenance.”* * *“Due to covid we have missed out on health visitor checks & children’s groups. We haven't managed to get to know other parents & babies which has been a massive shame, it's been* ***very lonely as a first time parent****. More should be done online for local parents during these times, broken down into particular age categories so parents/babies can meet other parents with babies the same age.”* * *“I had my baby during lockdown (April 2020) and have not seen a health visitor face to face. I have not had any information on when weigh in's have started (she has not been weighed). I am just lucky this was my second child as I felt more confident but I would say* ***if this was my first I would really have struggled with the lack of contact and support****. Sad that they were not able to start up covid friendly stay and plays/groups for parents to meet other parents.”* * *“There has been such an underwhelming lack of support for new parents during lockdown (covid 19). From no health visits to home to baby classes being closed. Even though learning at any age is vital and critical. I'm fortunate to have a fantastic support network and work in the education sector to aid the needs of my child. However, I fear if I have felt vulnerable, pushed aside and my child part of a lost generation, I can only imagine how parents and children in severe need are not managing or coping.* ***How many children are going to slip through the nets****? It cannot just be left to schools to provide this care. Several facilities have been taken away prior to lockdown. Why isnt more being done for parents and children from birth.”* * *“My Daughter is 7 months old and* ***I’ve felt very isolated and lonely*** *during that time. While I appreciate the pandemic has played a huge part in this, there has been* ***time to come up with alternative ways to support families*** *and this has been poor.”* * *“Although I think a lot of bits have moved onto* ***zoom*** */ social media due to Covid it* ***doesn’t replace the face to face interaction*** *that is needed for parents to meet each other. It’s a very difficult time not spreading the virus but without my mummy friends I would struggle hugely.”* * *“There should be more initiatives to help parents struggling with loneliness, most parents don’t engage well with others unless they are in closer contacts.”* * *“I don’t think there is enough information* ***of how to get help with children after they start school****. E.g. you have a health visitor and then I feel you're on your own once the child starts school. Apart from teacher support but there is no support for parenting at home.”* * *“I have found that there is* ***very little support for parents who have no additional needs either themselves or their children****. So when it comes to breastfeeding, sleep advice, weaning and development it can feel very overwhelming and isolating. I also feel that the help offered is not given by professionals with enough education or training, for example there is no offer of* ***specialists breastfeeding support*** *only by volunteers once weekly at children’s centres and when the government and U.K as a whole are trying to normalise breastfeeding and increase the uptake and continuous Brest feeding up to and beyond 6months this does not make sense or offer mothers the right support. Also whenever I’ve asked for assistance around sleep I have been offered sleep training and although this is an approach it is not what I feel should be the first thing to offer parents or the only thing and more evidence based training should be offered to professionals advising families. Better breastfeeding support. Gentle and evidenced based approaches to sleep and breastfeeding for both professionals and how this is passed on to parents.”* * *“Antenatal and post natal care, and* ***post natal mental health support****, are of vital support to women, and can make the difference between life and death.”* * *“More support for Post Natal Depression, I was told (incorrectly) by HV my child would taken away if I suffered with mental health after birth. This* ***stopped me reaching out for help*** *when I needed it.”* * *“To ensure that the parents of 2020 babies are supported to find families and new mummy friends after a year of limited contact. To have readily access to mental health support following an isolating year. To have access to speak to someone (ideally the same Person) on a regular basis to support new parents. To help allow all parents to easily attend NCT or similar without it only being available for people who can afford it. I met and made my child’s baby friends through a private Hypnobirthing group without that I would have had limited contact with babies of a similar age.”* * *“Marketing of all information to* ***parents****! mums and dads need to feel supported, but* ***often don’t need much more than an organised social setting and one professional on hand*** *to discuss issues with. Toddler groups are a great way to interact, and would bridge the gap between baby, pre-school and school.”* * *“Maybe a strategy to ensure younger children haven’t been affected by Covid and lockdowns etc emotionally or developmentally.”* * *“The strategy should seek to address what can be learned from the pandemic and the experiences of families to ensure care and support is better provided should an issue of this nature occur again. It also needs to look at what support might be needed by families affected by the pandemic in the future.”* * *“I think that due to the pandemic that all children's mental health will have been affected in some way.* ***Support at school and wellness classes*** *to become an everyday normality. Otherwise in years to come our pandemic with be a heavy one of messed up teenagers and young adults.”* |

|  |
| --- |
| **IAG:**   * *“It can be* ***confusing to know what is offered****... children’s centres seemed to vanish and venues / services often change or can be geographically far away. A single hub that could advise / arrange support / signpost to options would help to simplify things for parents and educational / childcare providers.”* * *“I find that* ***because I don’t receive benefits that my options are limited immediately****. It’s the first question I am asked when trying to find help and I feel I get less help because of it. Information about the school nurse has never been made obvious to me. I am currently using this service and think it is under advertised. It seems an amazing tool to have.”* * *“The questions in this survey implied that Essex offers a lot of help and support but* ***I’ve never heard of any of this****. Yes we earn well now but on maternity leave it was a struggle and I took advantage of any free classes and information then, but since that time straight after birth where you do get a lot of information, I can’t say I get any information on child support at all as children has grown and I am someone who actively looks for information and support, so I would say you need to better advertise any services you offer.”* * *“Need an easy place to find everything going on provided by the council, like the website. I hate trawling Facebook to find out what hubs are doing. More playgroups are needed.”* * *“A calendar of events within locality for parents. An easy to find and UPTO DATE list of classes and playgroups for parents and babies/ toddlers. Prompts for parents: when to look at nurseries/childminders etc (if needed to return to work post maternity leave), direct emails to families when it is time to apply to school places, what children need in terms of vaccines and when clearly listed, better communication from health regarding checks (2 year check etc).”* |

1. **Support for children with SEND**

Comments related to children with SEND generally revolved around these three broad themes:

* SEND - Better/earlier SEND support/intervention for children
* Better SEND IAG/training for childcare staff
* Better SEND IAG for parents

These are probably not dissimilar to those raised in other research conducted at Essex County Council, as well as issues observed in practice by professionals.

Support is viewed as slow and difficult to find. This includes pathway to diagnosis, as well as trying to find suitable childcare for SEND children. EY providers are not always able to provide the support needed due to lack of resources or training on particular conditions (e.g. autism, dyslexia and speech, language and communication needs).

|  |
| --- |
| **SEN comments:**   * *“As my son has SEN, this should be more readily available and communicated.* ***My son has had to wait until year 4 for someone to listen to me about Dyslexia****. They said my concerns were all normal in years 2 and 3 regarding his writing and spelling. They wouldn't listen and now he is only just receiving "some" support for his potential dyslexia. I find it frustrating and ridiculous that the school won't pursue a formal diagnosis. Why should this be any different to ADHD/Autism?? Something has to be done for SEN policies and processes.”* * *“****Speech and language needs improving****, should* ***not be a postcode lottery*** *as to what part of Essex you live in to being referred to a speech therapist whilst others having to go via numerous drop ins then chatterbox when actual 1 to 1 is required, people should not have to go private due to poor services in their area!”* * *“More support for preschools and Nursery to be able to support children with needs.”* * *“More awareness, identification and support to receive early intervention and start diagnosis processes.* ***SEN kids are left till they are drowning emotionally within mainstream*** *awaiting diagnosis and support.”* * *“Support for children with SEND. Essex have taken away all forms of support and as a result* ***my child has had nothing other than what we have privately paid for****. This is unacceptable. His nursery are clueless and do not know how to support him. The IP has been useless too! Essex have actively neglected children with SEN by pulling all services disallowing them access to trained professionals.”* * *“More awareness of the wide spectrum of autism in children and how to support parents and not ignore them.”* * *“People should know they can self refer, they need to be aware of how to access available funds or resources without stigma. They can request EHCP or Ed psych.”* * *“Recognition that* ***peer support*** *for parents* ***is one of the worse things you can offer a parent whose child has extra needs****. No one wants to be in a room of happy healthy children where no one understands the difficulties you face as a parent.”* |

1. **Broader system**

Comments relating to the broader system as a whole generally encompassed many of the points already raised above. These were often about different parts being disjointed, information not necessarily being passed between different parts, but mostly about the importance of all the individual parts in supporting children, parents and settings, reflecting on their intertwined nature.

|  |
| --- |
| ***Broader system comments:***   * *“Balance, it is vital all* ***children have access to the same standard of education regardless of their postcod****e. Why are schools still scraping by with poor levels of education. Our children have the right to a decent education as much as anyone else. SEN help needs to be widely available and not just for those underachieving; all children should thrive at school and be pushed to meet their individual potentials not just hit minimum national standards. There needs to be more nurseries that are better regulated and higher standards and deliver proper early years development. There is a lot of changes that need to be made and it needs to start with the bare bones of providing good quality teaching in a safe environment, then worry about everything else.”* * *“****ECC should be checking*** *that children with SEN and EHCPs, especially those* ***that attend Special Schools in Essex can access some level of care****. They can do this through the school by informing them of what care is available to them, and allowing them to have a referral to social care. A lot of children like mine who have both cognitive and physical difficulties and who require 24/7 care are told they do not qualify and have no access to a social worker. They are isolated while trying to care for a child and work to provide for their family with no access to childcare.”* * *“Give Early Years practitioners a pay rise! When my children were little and they went to nurseries, I paid so much for them to go and the staff were paid so little. It’s a joke really, they are educating and looking after our future! There needs to be more funding for early years settings and they deserve medals in my book for staying open during this pandemic and protecting the children so their mummy’s and daddy’s can do their jobs and keep people safe and the country running. They definitely don’t get the credit they deserve and are paid pittance!”* |

1. **Getting ready for school**

This theme was not as frequent as others and was mentioned in Q104 only.

Respondents called for more help with:

* Information about starting school and how to apply for a school place
* Information about what children should be able to do before starting school
* More focus on phonics in EY
* Information on deferring school start for Summer born children

More detail on this theme was provided in Q82 and Q87.

For the children that had started, their parents wanted guidance/ a checklist of what their child should be able to do before starting school. For children preparing to start, their parents also wanted this guidance, as well as more communication on applying for school, and face-to-face school visits were very important.

|  |
| --- |
| ***Getting ready for school comments:***   * *“I feel confident that my child is ready for school as she is an outgoing child who likes going to nursery. However, I feel for other parents of shy and quiet children who will struggle with their confidence and who may be nervous of starting school. Some* ***guidance as to how to discuss and prepare a child would be beneficial****.”* * *“I have already received help because I have two children very close in age. One started in September 2020, the other due to start in September 2021. I understand routine, things expected of children. I have lesser concerns about my younger child who is due to start September 2021 already at this point-- her ability to write her name and realise as well as recognise accurate phonemes, dress herself, social skills etc. I have more concerns currently about my child that started school in September 2020 due to his* ***additional SEN needs****. I do not feel I need additional support at present because I know what is expected of her when she does begin school Sept 2021.”* * *“What to expect, what to do, what to organise,* ***what she needed to be ready****, his to prepare her, especially with such a big gap from a childcare setting due to COVID.”* |

This information is issued by:  
Essex County Council

Research & Citizen Insight team

Katerina Glover, Senior Researcher

Contact us:  
[le.ho-everiste@essex.gov.uk](mailto:le.ho-everiste@essex.gov.uk)

[research@essex.gov.uk](mailto:research@essex.gov.uk)   
[www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk)

The information contained in this document can be translated,

and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

Published February 2021.