

3. Childcare for the Under Fives

3.1 Children's Centres

The availability of childcare for the under fives has been assessed using Swindon's Children's Centre areas. Children's Centres have been used in order that there is a local delivery mechanism for any recommendations made. Each Children's Centre has a main hub where the majority of children's centre services are located or coordinated. In terms of childcare provision, each area is supported by a number of schools, pre schools, daycare nurseries and childminders who contribute towards childcare services in the area. Children's Centres are being introduced in three phases. The phase one Children's Centres are all fully operational, phase two Children's Centres are due to be completed by 2008, and phase three Children's Centres are currently in the planning stage and due to be delivered by 2010.

3.2 Consultation with Parents

We sent questionnaires to parents about their unmet childcare and early education needs via pre schools, nurseries and childminders. We sent 4,100 questionnaires and received 844 responses. This section summarises the results of that consultation except in two circumstances:

- 37 results which contribute to the profile of childcare need for parents of children with disabilities are shown in section 5.1.
- 73 results which contribute to the profile of childcare need for families who have indicated they are not white British are shown in section 5.2.

3.3 Quantitative Analysis

There was a 21% response rate from this population of parents of whom 734 ie 87% were using childcare or early education in pre schools, nurseries and with childminders. Due to the consultation method, the majority of these parents have a pre school child, but need for childcare for the whole family including older and younger siblings was considered.

3.3.1 Childcare

We asked parents when they would need additional care and for what aged children. As the responses for each age group in some Children's Centre areas were small, this study gives us limited information about where new group childcare would need to be developed. It does show that there is a low level of unmet demand across the under fives age range in all locations and at all times.

- We asked how many children are in the family.

Children in Family	Number of responses	Percentage response
1	224	30%
2	377	51%
3	105	14%
4	25	3%
5	3	<1%

Families with three or more children – 133 or 18%

Families with four or more children – 28 or 4%

- We asked whether parents had any problems with childcare which enables them to access work or training.

	Number of responses	Percentage Response
Yes	84	11%
No	576	78%
No response	74	10%

- We asked what type of childcare parents prefer.

	Preferences expressed by parents using childminders	Preferences expressed by parents using group childcare
Childminder	28	56
Group	0	281
Combination of both	10	126
No preference	1	232
Total responses	39	695

3.3.2 Early Education

Five hundred and thirty four parents responded that they benefit from early education funding. Parents are at the time of writing entitled to five 2.5 hour early education sessions a week over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying three and four year olds.

- We asked parents whether they are able to access their full entitlement of early education sessions. We asked how many sessions parents currently use and how many additional sessions they would use if they were available.

Number of sessions per week	Parents accessing that number of sessions per week
1	3
2	35
3	75
4	124

5

297

Number additional of sessions wanted per week	Number of parents wanting these additional sessions
1	74
2	42
3	16
4	1

24% of parents with an eligible child want one or more additional sessions to access more of their early education entitlement.

- We asked parents whether they would like to use their entitlement over fewer days in the week eg by using five sessions over two and a half days. 38% of parents using early education would like to be able to do this.

Yes	204	38%
No	277	51%
No response	53	9%

- We asked parents whether they would like to be able to use their entitlement over a longer period than 38 weeks. 33% of parents using early education would like to be able to do this.

Yes	177	33%
No	285	53%
No response	72	13%

3.3.3 Employment

- We asked parents about their work

	Responses	Responses as a percentage
Full time employed	156	21%
Part time employed	337	46%
Self employed	54	7%
In education	10	1%
Unemployed	21	2%
Looking after the home	166	23%

nb. The total number of responses exceeds the total questionnaire responses as some parents ticked more than one category.

3.3.4 Information

- We asked parents whether they know about the Children's Information Service

	Responses	Responses as a percentage
Yes	572	77%
No	162	22%
No response	0	0%

- We asked parents whether they are aware of how the Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can support them with their childcare costs

	Responses	Responses as a percentage
Yes	546	74%
No	170	23%
No response	18	2%

Recommendations from Quantitative Analysis

While the majority (78%) of parents report that accessing childcare and early education for work or training purposes is not a problem for them, 11% are experiencing difficulties. For each of these families this is a significant barrier to accessing the labour market effectively.

3.3.5 Additional Consultation with Early Education Providers

A sample of preschools and nurseries were contacted to ask about their allocation of early education places. Some pre schools are able to offer the full five day entitlement to all eligible three and four year olds but many are unable to due either to high demand or limitations on the availability of premises. Some parents choose not to take up the full five day entitlement. Many pre schools are able to offer five sessions to new children in the autumn term but are unable to do so by the spring and summer terms. In these cases many offer two or three sessions to new children at these times and increase to five sessions where possible as the child progresses through pre school. This demonstrates an informal market allocation of early education places which is dependent on the time of year a child is born. In these circumstances parents frequently choose to divide their early education entitlement between two early education providers.

3.3.6 Childcare Recommendations

- A sufficient number of parents accessing either group childcare or care with a childminder have expressed a desire for childminder and group care to work more effectively together as a holistic service. As childminder groups and pre schools are learning new ways of working effectively within the Children's Centre structure, Swindon Sure Start Partnership will carry out or commission additional work through these channels to encourage providers of childcare in a given locality to offer complementary services.

3.3.7 Early Education Recommendations

- Swindon Sure Start Partnership has already worked in partnership with a number of preschools to develop a more flexible early education offer. This has meant that a number of pre schools are now able to offer five two and a half hour sessions over a minimum of three days, and some full daycare nurseries are able to offer the full entitlement of early education over two and a half days. Given the proportion of parents in part time employment and the expressed demand, Swindon Sure Start Partnership will continue to fund the immediate development of more flexible early education in Swindon's pre schools and nurseries. This will have the additional benefit of increasing overall capacity in the provision of early education places across the Local Authority.
- 24% of parents with eligible children wish to access additional early education sessions as part of their entitlement. Where this need can be met by increasing the early education capacity of existing preschools (as above) this will be supported. Where additional need cannot be met in this way, a limited programme of new pre school development will be supported.

3.3.8 Information Recommendations

Children's Information Service

Reliable information about childcare services is vital to respond to parents' changing childcare needs as their work changes and their children progress through school. The Children's Information Service until recently has offered advice to parents about finding early education and childcare in Swindon under a service level agreement with Swindon Borough Council. From April 2008 the provision of information to parents about childcare is being remodelled to bring it into the delivery of Swindon Borough Council's One Stop Shop and Contact Centre.

- The transition of the Children's Information function from the Children's Information Service to Swindon Borough Council's One Stop Shop and Contact Centre will be advertised.
- Where awareness of the children's information function is lower than average we will target additional support through outreach work and promotion within childcare settings.

Tax Credits

The tax credit system enables qualifying parents to claim money to support a proportion of their childcare costs. 23% of the parents using early education and childcare who responded are not aware of this.

- The availability of the childcare element of the working tax credit will be actively promoted through Children's Centres and associated childcare providers.

3.4 Qualitative Analysis

Parents were invited to make additional comments about the provision of early education and childcare in Swindon. Many parents gave feedback in this way, providing additional insight into the pattern of childcare demand.

3.4.1 Availability of Childcare and Early Education

There were sixty-seven comments about the availability of childcare and early education in Swindon expressing the difficulties these parents are facing in finding care to support atypical work, difficulty in being able to access the full early education entitlement and the provision of holiday care, particularly in families with both pre school and school aged children. Typical comments include:

- Both my husband and I need to start work at 8am but it is very difficult to find childcare before 8am.
- Have found that very few places operate past 6.30pm and finish work at 7.30pm.
- I am well aware that pre school places in my area are very limited and unable to offer the five sessions.
- Wider introduction of breakfast clubs at schools.
- Childcare during school holidays for pre school children is difficult as pre schools are not open and holiday clubs only cover school age children.

3.4.2 Flexibility of Childcare and Early Education

There were eleven comments about flexibility of childcare all relating to parents not being able to access care at the times they need. Typical comments include:

- More flexibility with use of 12.5 hr entitlement - ie use over 2/3 days rather than 5 sessions would be helpful to part time workers.
- Lack of flexibility at day nurseries.
- If you have one child in school, you have to pay for 'full time' child care for the other
- Fitting around hours that I work, I do shifts.

3.4.3 Affordability of Childcare and Early Education

There were sixty-four comments about affordability of childcare, many from parents who have no knowledge of the way the tax credit system could potentially support the cost. Other parents mention how they do not work sufficient hours to qualify for tax credits and how they need to rely on informal care by family members. Typical comments are:

- Quality childcare is expensive.
- Free childcare is only 2.5 hours per day which makes it impossible for me to work before my youngest child starts going to school
- Childcare for 0 - 3 years is too expensive to allow a parent to go back to work part time.
- Too expensive for me to return to work to pay for three children in childcare.
- I want to work part time but childcare cost is too expensive.

3.4.4 Access to Information about Childcare and Early Education

There were thirteen comments about the provision of information about childcare services all suggesting the need for information to be more accessible. Typical comments include:

- The playgroup is good, however I found it on my own. The information should be more readily available.
- I think there should be more information given by means of meetings or leaflets on the free government funding sessions as I'm confused.
- Very little information provided directly to parents, although plenty available from CIS if you know to ask for it.

3.4.5 Childcare During Transition to Primary School

There were twenty-four comments expressing concern about managing the change in childcare arrangements when children start school. Typical comments are:

- I am concerned about how I will manage before and after school childcare provision when my eldest child starts school.
- Easy now but not when they start school.
- More information needed on future plans for school age childcare.
- I feel that work opportunities will be limited for me when both children start school as it is difficult to find part time childcare in school holidays.

3.4.6 Quality of Care

There were sixty six positive comments in total and four negative comments about childcare quality.

Typical comments from parents expressing satisfaction with childcare and early education availability include:

- I have an excellent childminder who is also part of a flexible childminding group.
- I think childcare and early education in Swindon is very good. There seems to be lots of opportunities.
- My daughters' pre school is wonderful. They enjoy it very much.

- My nursery provides excellent care for my daughter which makes my life one hundred times easier.

Negative comments expressed dissatisfaction with standards of care.

3.4.7 Other Comments

A number of other comments were made which express parents' thoughts about childcare but are outside the influence of Swindon Sure Start Partnership's work or outside the scope of this study (see section 1.2).

3.4.8 Additional Recommendations from Qualitative Analysis

- Promote the flexible offer for childminding encouraging the availability of childcare at atypical times.
- Develop childcare brokerage services for parents to support them during their child's transition to primary school.
- Develop parental awareness of the route for complaints about standards of care.

3.5 Table to show responses by Children's Centre area.

3.5.1 Childcare

- We asked how many children are in the family.

Children's Centre Area	Number of Children					
	1	2	3	4	5	6+
Abbey Meads	0	7	2	1	0	0
Drove	20	33	7	2	0	0
Eldene	20	40	13	4	0	0
Gorse Hill	30	34	7	2	0	0
Haydon	6	17	6	2	0	0
Highworth	32	35	8	2	0	0
Moredon	7	13	2	0	0	0
Parks and Walcot	1	7	4	0	0	0
Pinehurst and Penhill	3	1	2	0	1	0
Ridgeway	36	55	11	2	0	0
Robert le Kyng	6	4	6	2	0	0
Saltway	22	57	15	2	1	0
Saplings	22	53	13	2	1	0
West Swindon	19	21	9	4	0	0

- We asked whether parents had any problems with childcare which enables them to access work or training.

Children's Centre Area	Responses		
	Yes	No	No response
Abbey Meads	1	8	1
Drove	7	47	8
Eldene	8	64	5
Gorse Hill	6	57	10
Haydon	4	25	2
Highworth	12	56	9
Moredon	0	22	0
Parks and Walcot	0	9	3
Pinehurst and Penhill	1	6	0
Ridgeway	18	77	9
Robert le Kyng	0	15	3
Saltway	14	77	6
Saplings	10	69	12
West Swindon	3	44	6

- We asked what type of childcare parents prefer.

Children's Centre Area	Preferences by parents using childminders			
	Child - minder	Group	Combina - tion of both	No preference
Abbey Meads	4	0	0	1
Drove	0	0	1	0
Eldene	0	0	0	0
Gorse Hill	0	0	0	0
Haydon	1	0	0	0
Highworth	6	0	4	0
Moredon	0	0	1	0
Parks and Walcot	3	0	1	0
Pinehurst and Penhill	0	0	0	0
Ridgeway	2	0	1	0
Robert le Kyng	0	0	0	0
Saltway	5	0	1	0
Saplings	1	0	0	0
West Swindon	6	0	1	0

Children's Centre Area	Preferences by parents using group childcare			
	Child - minder	Group	Combina - tion of both	No preference
Abbey Meads	0	1	0	4
Drove	5	20	16	20
Eldene	9	29	16	24
Gorse Hill	4	45	13	12
Haydon	2	11	3	14
Highworth	6	27	11	24
Moredon	5	8	2	6
Parks and Walcot	1	2	3	2
Pinehurst and Penhill	0	3	1	3
Ridgeway	0	51	23	27
Robert le Kyng	3	7	0	8
Saltway	12	28	20	31
Saplings	5	35	8	42
West Swindon	4	14	10	18

3.5.2 Early Education

Parents are at the time of writing entitled to five 2.5 hour early education sessions a week over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying three and four year olds.

- We asked parents whether they are able to access their full entitlement of early education sessions. We asked how many sessions parents currently use and how many additional sessions they would use if they were available.

	Number of sessions used				
	1	2	3	4	5
Children's Centre Area	1	2	3	4	5
Abbey Meads	0	0	2	2	3
Drove	0	4	9	8	30
Eldene	0	2	5	16	44
Gorse Hill	1	1	4	15	25
Haydon	0	2	4	8	14
Highworth	0	0	4	8	28
Moredon	0	2	3	4	8
Parks and Walcot	0	0	0	3	5
Pinehurst and Penhill	0	0	4	0	2
Ridgeway	0	6	15	15	30
Robert le Kyng	1	2	0	2	9
Saltway	0	7	9	24	43
Saplings	1	4	8	10	39
West Swindon	0	5	8	9	17

	Number of additional sessions wanted				
	1	2	3	4	5
Children's Centre Area	1	2	3	4	5
Abbey Meads	1	1	0	0	-
Drove	3	6	1	0	-
Eldene	11	1	0	0	-
Gorse Hill	8	2	0	1	-
Haydon	3	4	1	0	-
Highworth	5	1	0	0	-
Moredon	2	2	1	0	-
Parks and Walcot	3	0	0	0	-
Pinehurst and Penhill	0	3	0	0	-
Ridgeway	15	6	2	0	-
Robert le Kyng	1	0	0	0	-
Saltway	11	8	4	0	-
Saplings	5	1	3	0	-
West Swindon	6	7	4	0	-

- We asked parents whether they would like to use their entitlement over fewer days in the week eg by using five sessions over two and a half days.

Children's Centre Area	Responses		
	Yes	No	No response
Abbey Meads	5	2	0
Drove	18	31	2
Eldene	14	43	10
Gorse Hill	23	22	1
Haydon	7	18	3
Highworth	22	17	1
Moredon	6	11	0
Parks and Walcot	1	6	1
Pinehurst and Penhill	3	2	1
Ridgeway	25	35	6
Robert le Kyng	6	4	4
Saltway	26	47	10
Saplings	28	23	11
West Swindon	20	16	3

- We asked parents whether they would like to be able to use their entitlement over a longer period than 38 weeks.

Children's Centre Area	Responses		
	Yes	No	No response
Abbey Meads	6	1	0
Drove	17	30	4
Eldene	13	41	13
Gorse Hill	21	22	2
Haydon	9	16	3
Highworth	16	22	2
Moredon	8	9	0
Parks and Walcot	1	5	2
Pinehurst and Penhill	3	4	0
Ridgeway	23	32	11
Robert le Kyng	4	5	5
Saltway	25	45	13
Saplings	16	35	11
West Swindon	15	18	6

3.5.3 Employment

- We asked parents about their work

Children's Centre Area	Full time employed	Part time employed	Self employed	In education	Unemployed	Looking after the home
Abbey Meads	2	3	1	0	0	3
Drove	11	30	5	0	0	17
Eldene	13	36	6	2	1	25
Gorse Hill	28	34	4	3	1	5
Haydon	5	17	3	0	2	4
Highworth	13	40	10	1	1	14
Moredon	1	11	3	0	1	6
Parks and Walcot	2	3	1	2	0	4
Pinehurst / Penhill	2	1	0	0	0	4
Ridgeway	28	43	7	1	3	20
Robert le Kyng	4	6	1	0	1	5
Saltway	13	52	5	1	7	22
Saplings	21	40	4	0	1	24
West Swindon	13	21	4	0	3	13

3.5.4 Information

- We asked parents whether they know about the Children's Information Service

Children's Centre Area	Responses		
	Yes	No	No response
Abbey Meads	9	0	1
Drove	49	13	0
Eldene	53	25	0
Gorse Hill	59	16	0
Haydon	25	6	0
Highworth	57	20	1
Moredon	17	5	0
Parks and Walcot	11	1	0
Pinehurst and Penhill	5	2	0
Ridgeway	81	23	0
Robert le Kyng	16	2	0
Saltway	77	20	0
Saplings	66	23	2
West Swindon	47	6	0

- We asked parents whether they are aware of how the Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can support them with their childcare costs

Children's Centre Area	Responses		
	Yes	No	No response
Abbey Meads	8	1	1
Drove	44	15	3
Eldene	61	15	2
Gorse Hill	56	18	0
Haydon	23	8	0
Highworth	61	17	0
Moredon	19	3	0
Parks and Walcot	10	2	0
Pinehurst and Penhill	6	1	0
Ridgeway	70	24	10
Robert le Kyng	13	5	0
Saltway	70	27	0
Saplings	60	29	2
West Swindon	45	5	3

3.6 Local Profiles by Children's Centre Area

This section details childcare supply and demand in each of Swindon's Children's Centre areas. Figures in this section include responses from parents from priority and excluded groups to provide a complete picture of responses from each area.

3.6.1 Abbey Meads

The Children's Centre in the Abbey Meads area is a phase three Children's Centre which is planned to be delivered by March 2010.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There is one daycare setting in the Abbey Meads Children's Centre area, and 47 registered childminders offering a total of 205 registered places for under fives. Over all, known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 96 places.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £3.00 and £4.00 per hour, with only 3 childminders charging above £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Twenty two childminders offer care before 8am and 18 after 6pm. Four childminders offer services that finish earlier than 6pm but overall provision of care beyond core hours is extremely good.

Early Education Places: There are maintained nursery units at St Francis, Red Oaks and Orchid Vale schools. There are three sessional preschools in the area and early education places are available at the daycare nursery.

Childcare Demand

Fifteen families responded to the consultation which is very low. Findings are therefore not statistically significant. However, indications show that:

- There is some evidence that parents want to be able to use their early education entitlement over fewer days
- Parents have a very good awareness of the Children's Information Service but a very low awareness of the tax credit system.

Typical comments from parents include:

- Not really enough providers for wraparound care in North Swindon. Was lucky to find childminder who had just started childminding
- Cost of Childcare for under threes
- Need flexible childminding

Conclusions

Abbey Meads is a developing area of Swindon with a very high percentage of families with young children. Responses show that there is a lack of awareness of childcare services in the area as parents are expressing problems with availability when there is a high level of vacant childcare.

Recommendations

- Promote awareness of available childcare, and support childminders and providers to develop their marketing strategies.

3.6.2 Drove

The Children's Centre in the Drove area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at Drove Primary School and is delivered by its governing body. The Children's Centre supports an ethnically diverse community. Childcare places for the Children's Centre are provided by Toad Hall and the Children's Nursery.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are two daycare settings in the Drove Children's Centre area, one of which is the workplace nursery for Swindon Borough Council. There are also 18 registered childminders. The total number of childcare places for under fives is 277 with known vacancies at the time of assessment amounting to 78 places.

Affordability: Charges for daycare range from £150 - £177 per week and charges for childminders between £3.00 and £3.50. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Seven childminders offer care before 8am and 3 after 6pm. Four childminders offer hours which finish earlier than 6pm.

Early Education Places: Early education is offered at the maintained nursery unit at Drove school, at the daycare nurseries and at four sessional preschools. There is also a registered daycare provision at the Children's Centre at Drove which offers early education sessions and crèche facilities to support their work.

Childcare Demand

Seventy six families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average proportion of parents would prefer to use a combination of both group care and childminding services
- A lower than average percentage of parents are aware of tax credits.

Typical comments from parents include:

- Limited choice. Both my husband and I need to start work at 8am but it is very difficult to find childcare before 8am.
- No, I'm very lucky with an available supportive family who help.
- I have found the provision provided by the pre school has met all of my needs and has been of an excellent level.

Conclusions

Parents have expressed views about the limited flexibility of services and how this restricts their work options.

Recommendations

- Promote the flexible offer for childminding
- Develop complementary childminder and group provision to meet market need

3.6.3 Eldene

The Children's Centre in the Eldene area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at Eldene School and is delivered by The Children's Society. Full daycare is planned from May 2008.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are currently no full daycare settings in the Eldene Children's Centre area offering care all year round 8am – 6pm. There are two pre schools, Eldene and Covingham Kingfisher, that offer care services to wraparound their early education sessions during term time. There are also 35 childminders registered in the Eldene Children's Centre area. The total number of childcare places for under fives is 196 with known vacancies at the time of assessment amounting to 50 places.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £2.60 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Sixteen childminders offer care before 8am and 10 after 6pm. 14 childminders offer a service that finishes between 5 and 5.30pm.

Early Education Places: There are four sessional preschools in the Eldene Children's Centre area and early education available at the daycare settings.

Childcare Demand

Eighty one families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average proportion of parents (21%) would prefer to use a combination of both group care and childminding services
- A higher than average proportion of parents either work part time or look after the home.
- Awareness of the Children's Information Service is the lowest in Swindon.

Typical comments from parents include:

- The 12.5 hours could be explained to us better as we are not using all five sessions at present.
- My mum has my kids when I'm at work.
- I would like to see pre schools open through holidays

Conclusions: There is currently a good level of childcare activity to support part time working, often in combination with informal care provided by family. There are limited options for under 3's. Childcare to support full time work has not been identified as an issue by parents, however, holiday care has been.

Recommendations

- Develop complementary childminder and group provision to meet market need
- Promote the Children's Information Function through outreach work and via childcare and early education settings.
- Encourage childminders to open 8 – 6 where they do not already do so to support full time work.

3.6.4 Gorse Hill

The Children's Centre in the Gorse Hill area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at Gorse Hill Infant School and is delivered by the school governing body. Provision of full daycare is offered through signposted places at Little Stars Nursery at Swindon College.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are four daycare settings in the Gorse Hill Children's Centre area and 25 registered childminder offering a total of 269 registered places for under fives. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 55 places.

Affordability: Known charges for daycare range from £162 - £165 per week. Charges for childminders in this area range between £2.90 and £3.50 per hour with some enhanced charges for part time or atypical work. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Sixteen childminders offer care before 8am and 4 after 6pm with notably good provision of early morning care.

Early Education Places: There is a maintained nursery unit at Gorse Hill Infant School, two sessional pre schools and early education available at the daycare settings.

Childcare Demand

Eighty seven families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average percentage of parents using early education would like to use their entitlement more flexibly over fewer days.
- Parents in Gorse Hill are equally likely to be working full time as part time, with a much lower proportion than in other Children's Centre areas looking after the home.

Typical comments from parents include:

- The information should be automatically sent to parents. I had to ask friends with children to find out about the Children's Info Service.
- Extremely pleased with the provision I use
- I have an older child who's 10. Is there anything for older children in school hols I could use?
- Very expensive - almost not worth going to work.

Conclusions: The parents who responded to this survey give evidence of an active working community both full and part time. There is good level of childcare activity to support this. However, parents are still keen to see improvements to the local childcare market.

Recommendations

- Work with existing early education provision to assess options to deliver sessions more flexibly over fewer days.

3.6.5 Haydon

The Children's Centre in the Haydon area is a phase three Children's Centre which is planned to be delivered by 2010.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are no full daycare settings in the Haydon Children's Centre area offering care for 0 – 5 year olds. Haydon Meadow pre school offers an extended service for three and four year olds during term time enabling parents to access their early education entitlement more flexibly over 2 ½ days. There are 42 childminders registered in the area. The total number of registered childcare places for under fives is 144 with known vacancies at the time of assessment amounting to 46.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £3.00 and £4.00 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Fourteen childminders offer care before 8am and 6 after 6pm. 7 offer a service that finishes earlier than 6pm.

Early Education Places: There is one sessional pre school in the Haydon children's centre area and early education available at Haydon Meadow as above.

Childcare Demand

Thirty seven families responded to the consultation which is a limited response. Findings are therefore not statistically significant. However, indications show:

- There is some evidence that a high number of parents using early education would like to be able to access additional sessions
- The proportion of parents working part time compared to full time work or looking after the home is very high

Typical comments from parents include:

- Very few places operate past 6.30pm and finish work at 7.30pm.
- I think childcare and early education in Swindon is very good. There seems to be lots of opportunities.
- Lack of information
- I have found it really difficult to find places for my children over the summer holidays where they can be together.
- Have no family or close friends near by to look after children.

Conclusions: Indications show that there is a good level of childcare activity to support part time work but options for parents working full time, parents of under threes and parents working late shifts is limited.

Recommendations

- Work with existing early education provision to assess options to deliver sessions more flexibly.
- Promote awareness of available childcare, and support childminders and providers to develop their marketing strategies.

3.6.6 Highworth

The Children's Centre in the Highworth area is a phase three Children's Centre which is planned to be delivered by 2010.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There is one daycare setting in the Highworth Children's Centre area and 27 registered childminders offering a total of 115 registered childcare places. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 27 places.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £3.00 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Nineteen childminders offer care before 8am and 9 after 6pm. There are notably good opportunities for early morning care.

Early Education Places: There are three sessional preschools in the Highworth Children's Centre area. Vorda pre school and Highworth preschool are both able to offer the early education entitlement over three days. Early education is also available at the daycare setting.

Childcare Demand

Eighty five families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average proportion of parents expressed problems with finding childcare
- The proportion of parents saying they would like to use their early education entitlement over fewer days was the highest in Swindon
- A higher than average proportion of parents work part time
- Knowledge of the Children's Information Service was below average

Typical comments from parents include:

- I don't drive so getting child to nursery and working a full day is difficult.
- Cost if you are lower paid. Flexibility - have to have set days
- Having a local very high quality childminder has made going back to work possible.
- More childcare for children with disability.

Conclusions: There is a good level of childcare activity for 0 – 5's with a lower than average number of vacancies in the Highworth area. There is a high proportion of part time working. Travel logistics were reported as a barrier to work in combination with childcare availability.

Recommendations

- Work with existing early education provision to assess options to deliver sessions more flexibly over fewer days.
- Adopt where appropriate learning from rural models of childcare delivery in other local authorities

3.6.7 Moredon

The Children's Centre in the Moredon area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at Moredon Nursery and Primary School and is delivered by the school governing body. Full daycare is planned from September 2008.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are currently no daycare settings in the Moredon Children's Centre area. There are 17 registered childminders offering 40 childcare places for under fives. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 18.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £2.50 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Seven childminders offer care before 8am and 2 after 6pm. Seven childminders offer hours that finish earlier than 6pm. Other childminders finish at 6pm

Early Education Places: Early education is offered at the maintained nursery unit at Moredon Primary School. There are two sessional preschools in the Moredon Children's Centre area.

Childcare Demand

Twenty three families responded to the consultation which is low. Findings are therefore not statistically significant. However, indications show that:

- A very low proportion of parents work full time
- Awareness of the tax credit system is very high.

Typical comments from parents include:

- The playgroup is good, however I found it on my own. The information should be more readily available.
- Very happy with pre school.
- Grandparents help out.

Conclusions: There is a comparatively low level of childcare activity in Moredon. However, there is still a considerable proportion of childcare places vacant. Very few childminders offer care later than 6pm and many finish earlier than 6pm which indicates a childcare market that supports part time work. This is mirrored in the very low proportion of parents saying they work full time.

Recommendations

- deliver outreach services in children's centres and other parent groups to ensure that parents are well informed of childcare services and support available.
- Encourage childminders to open 8 – 6 where they do not already do so to support full time work.

3.6.8 Parks and East Walcot

The Children's Centre in the Parks and East Walcot area is a phase one Children's Centre. It is located at Goddard Park Primary School and is delivered by the school governing body. The school also provides full daycare for 0 – 4 year olds 8am – 6pm all year round.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are two daycare settings in the Parks and East Walcot Children's Centre area and 18 registered childminders offering 191 childcare places for under fives. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 8 places although most settings had not reported their vacancies.

Affordability:

Charges for daycare range from £150 - £180 per week and charges for childminders in this area average between £2.50 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Six childminders offer care before 8am and none after 6pm. Five childminders offer services that finish before 6pm. Others finish at 6pm.

Early Education Places: There are maintained nursery units at Oaktree Nursery and Primary School, Goddard Park Primary and Mountford Manor Primary School. There are two sessional pre schools in the area. Early education is also available at the daycare settings.

Childcare Demand

Thirteen families responded to the consultation which was a very low response. It was not possible to make any statistical observations from this. However, the responses that were received did not show any outcomes that were different from the average responses, except for a very high awareness of the Children's Information Service.

Comments from parents include:

- Very happy with childcare provision at present and also very lucky to have close family to help with childcare.
- Me and my husband swap work, he works days and I work nights. The problem is in the morning because my husband starts work at 7am and I finish work at 8am
- have stuck to the same childminder for the past 3 years

Conclusions

There is a mixture of childcare services to support full time and part time childcare needs for 0 – 4 year olds with limited vacancies.

Recommendations

- deliver outreach services in children's centres and other parent groups to ensure that parents are well informed of childcare services and support available.
- Encourage childminders to open 8 – 6 where they do not already do so to support full time work.

3.6.9 Pinehurst and Penhill

The Children's Centre in the Pinehurst and Penhill area is a phase one Children's Centre. It is located at the former Sure Start Local Programme in Penhill and is delivered by Swindon Primary Care Trust. Daycare is provided at Bright Start Day Nursery.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There is one daycare setting in the Pinehurst and Penhill Children's Centre area and seven registered childminders offering a total of 53 places for the under fives. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 13.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £3.00 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Four childminders offer care before 8am and one after 6pm.

Early Education Places: There are maintained nursery units providing early education at the Academy, Penhill Primary School and Sevenfields Primary School. There are two sessional pre schools in the Pinehurst and Penhill Children's Centre area. Early education places are available at the daycare setting.

Childcare Demand

Seven families responded to the consultation which was a very low response. It was not possible to make any statistical observations from this. However, there is some indication that parents wish to use their early education entitlement over fewer days, and that awareness of tax credits and children's information is good.

Comments from parents include:

- The cost
- My husband looks after him full time.

Consultation about childcare has also taken place at Bright Start Day Nursery providing additional insight into the local childcare market.

Conclusions: Childcare and early education services are available in the Pinehurst and Penhill area with limited take up.

Recommendations:

- deliver outreach services in children's centres and other parent groups to ensure that parents are well informed of childcare services and support available.

3.6.10 Ridgeway

The Children's Centre in the Ridgeway area is a phase three Children's Centre which is planned to be delivered by 2010.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are six daycare settings in the Ridgeway Children's Centre area, and 36 registered childminders. They offer 450 registered childcare places for under fives. Known vacancies with childminders at the time of assessment amounted to 17 places. Vacancies at the daycare nurseries were unknown.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area average between £2.60 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Eleven childminders offer care before 8am and 3 after 6pm. 4 childminders offer services that finish before 6pm but two of these offer an early morning service.

Early Education Places: There are five sessional pre schools in the Ridgeway Children's centre area and early education available at the daycare settings.

Childcare Demand

One hundred and seventeen families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average percentage of parents reported difficulties with finding childcare
- A higher than average proportion of parents would prefer to use a combination of group care and childminding
- A higher than average proportion of parents are unable to access their full entitlement of early education
- A higher than average proportion of parents work full time
- Ridgeway had one of the lowest levels of awareness of the tax credit system in Swindon.

Typical comments from parents include:

- Just having 2 children in nursery is very expensive - more than I earn!
- Pre school places in my area are very limited and unable to offer the five sessions.
- Not a problem at the moment as my shift starts 7am and the nursery is open for this. There will be childcare problems when she starts school.

Conclusions: There is a very high level of childcare activity and work in the Ridgeway area. Many parents are very happy with the quality and availability of their childcare though many parents still have difficulties in finding childcare services. Many parents are reporting affordability as a barrier but there is a very low awareness of the tax credit system.

Recommendations

- Work in partnership with the private and voluntary sector for the development of new pre schools in areas where there is insufficient capacity (Old Town)
- Develop complementary childminder and group provision to meet market need
- Actively promote the availability of the childcare element of the working tax credit

3.6.11 Robert le Kyng

The Children's Centre in the Robert le Kyng area is a phase one Children's Centre. It is located at Robert le Kyng School and is delivered by Barnardos. A full daycare nursery provided by Headstarts is co located on site offering care for 0 – 4 year olds, 8am – 6pm all year round.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are two daycare settings in the Robert le Kyng Children's Centre area and 15 registered childminders offering a total of 152 childcare places for the under fives. Known vacancies with childminders at the time of assessment amounted to 32 places. Vacancies at the daycare nurseries were unknown.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area average between £3.00 and £3.75 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Ten childminders offer care before 8am and 7 after 6pm. 4 childminders offer a service that finishes before 6pm but they offer an early start.

Early Education Places: Early education is offered at the maintained nursery unit at Even Swindon Primary School. There are three sessional preschools in the area and early education available at the daycare settings.

Childcare Demand

Twenty two families responded to the consultation which is low. Findings are therefore not statistically significant. However, indications show that:

- There is some indication that parents would like to use their early education entitlement over fewer days
- There is a lower than average awareness of the tax credit system.

Typical comments from parents include:

- Free childcare is only 2.5 hours per day which makes impossible for me to work before my youngest child starts going to school
- At present I am perfectly happy with our childcare arrangements although I do feel information regarding pre school could be made more easily / widely available.
- My child is cared for by grandparents at weekends or evenings

Conclusions: There are services in the Robert le Kyng Children's Centre area that have the potential to meet the needs of parents working full time or part time with some known vacancies.

Recommendations

- deliver outreach services in children's centres and other parent groups to ensure that parents are well informed of childcare services and support available.
- Actively promote the availability of the childcare element of the working tax credit through Children's Centres and childcare providers.

3.6.12 Saltway

The Children's Centre in the Saltway area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at the former Saltway School and is delivered by the Children's Society. Koalas opportunity group and Portage are located on the site. Daycare is provided through signposted places at Windmill Hill Day Nursery.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are two daycare settings in the Saltway Children's Centre area and 23 registered childminders offering a total of 254 places for the under fives. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 45.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area range between £3.00 and £3.80 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Nine childminders offer care before 8am and 2 after 6pm with one childminder offering total flexibility on her availability to work.

Early Education Places: There are six sessional pre schools in the Saltway Children's centre area including Koalas and early education available at the daycare settings and through portage.

Childcare Demand

One hundred and twenty three families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average percentage of parents reported difficulties with finding childcare
- A higher than average proportion of parents would prefer to use a combination of group care and childminding
- A higher than average proportion of parents are unable to access their full entitlement of early education
- A low proportion of parents work full time.
- A lower than average percentage of parents are aware of tax credits

Typical comments from parents include:

- Yes, affordability and fitting around hours that I work, I do shifts.
- Not enough cheap childcare provision
- I think there should be more info given by means of meetings or leaflets on the free gov funding sessions as I'm confused

Conclusions: There is childcare and early education available across the under fives age range in Saltway however parents report difficulties accessing childcare. Parents who responded to the survey show a picture of fragmented childcare need to cover part time and shift work.

Recommendations: Recommendations for the Saltway children's centre area need to be read in conjunction with the recommendations for the west Swindon children's centre area.

- Actively promote the availability of the childcare element of the working tax credit through children's centres and childcare providers.

- Develop complementary childminder and group provision to meet market need

3.6.13 Saplings

The Children's Centre in the Saplings area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at Grange Infant School and is delivered by the school governing body. Daycare is provided through signposted places at Bright Start Day Nursery

Childcare Supply

Availability: There are four daycare settings in the Saplings Children's Centre area (one of which is newly registered) and 35 registered childminders offering a total of 205 places for the under fives. Known vacancies for childminder places at the time of assessment amounted to 26.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area average between £3.00 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Twenty two childminders offer care before 8am and 4 after 6pm with notably good opportunities for early morning care.

Early Education Places: There are six sessional pre schools in the Saplings Children's Centre area and early education places are available at the daycare settings.

Childcare Demand

One hundred and nine families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- Awareness of both the Children's Information Service and the tax credit system was very low.
- The proportion of parents saying they would like to use their early education entitlement over fewer days was high

Typical comments from parents include:

- Nursery is great for my son. But what are working parents supposed to do in the school holidays!!
- Easy now but not when they start school.
- More flexibility with use of 12.5 hr entitlement

Conclusions: Awareness of how the childcare system works is very low in this area. There are many choices for parents to use their early education entitlement but availability of childcare particularly for the under threes and during the holidays is patchy.

Recommendations

- Work with existing early education provision to assess options to deliver sessions more flexibly over fewer days.
- Actively promote the availability of the childcare element of the working tax credit through the Children's Centre and childcare providers.
- Target awareness of the children's information function through promotion in childcare settings

3.6.14 West Swindon

The Children's Centre in the West Swindon area is a phase two Children's Centre. It is located at and delivered by the West Swindon Family Project. Daycare is provided through signposted places at Headstarts day nursery at Westlea.

Childcare Supply

Availability: There is one daycare setting in the West Swindon Children's Centre area and 50 registered childminders offering a total of 172 places for the under fives. Known vacancies for these childcare places at the time of assessment amounted to 52.

Affordability: Charges for childminders in this area average between £2.50 and £3.50 per hour. The Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed for these costs.

Flexibility: Twenty five childminders offer care before 8am and 8 after 6pm. Several offer hours to suit school aged children or offer additional flexibility.

Early Education Places: There are maintained nursery units at Toothill Primary School and Oliver Tomkins Infant School. There are three sessional pre schools in the West Swindon Children's Centre area. Early education is available at the daycare setting.

Childcare Demand

Sixty families responded to the consultation. Key findings include:

- A higher than average percentage of parents using early education would like to use their entitlement more flexibly over fewer days.
- A higher than average proportion of parents are unable to access their full entitlement of early education
- A higher than average proportion of parents would prefer to use a combination of group care and childminding

Typical comments from parents include:

- More funded sessions. Cheaper childcare in school holidays.
- More information needed on future plans for school age childcare ie extended school hours / wraparound clubs / holiday clubs etc.
- I want to work part time but childcare cost is too expensive.

Conclusions: The number of childminders in the area is high and options to support childcare beyond 8 – 6 are good. Parents are keen to see much greater flexibility about how they use their early education entitlement.

Recommendations: Recommendations for the West Swindon Children's Centre area need to be read in conjunction with the recommendations for the Saltway children's centre area.

- Develop complementary childminder and group provision to meet market need
- Work with existing early education provision to assess options to deliver sessions more flexibly over fewer days.