



supporting families to support children



What Scottish parents tell us

**IPSOS MORI POLL
UNDERTAKEN FOR PAS 2010**

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Executive Summary

Background

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by Parenting across Scotland to undertake a national survey of 1,000 parents. The survey focused on respondents' experiences of bringing up children and was conducted by telephone between 20 May and 24 June 2010.

Key findings

Support and advice

- Depending on the specific issue they are facing, parents mostly rely on health visitors, doctors and their own parents or relatives for information and advice on parenting issues. Those with older children also rely to some extent on their child's school.
- Almost three quarters (72%) of respondent could not name any organisation or website that provides support to parents.
- Around three in five (61%) respondents had taken their child to see a GP in the last year for *health-related* reasons. For the large majority of these parents the experience was a positive one with more than nine in ten of them saying their GP was good at: listening to them; communicating with their child; and talking in a way that helped them understand their child's condition and treatment.
- Only 5% of respondents had sought advice or support from a GP on *parenting-related issues*. However, among this group, experiences were again very positive, with a majority rating their GP as good or very good in terms of being easy to talk to (87%), taking their problems seriously (87%) and providing helpful advice (79%).

Relationship strains

- When asked what sorts of things put a strain on relationships with their partner, respondents most commonly mentioned money worries (33%), their children's behaviour or other parenting issues (27%) and work (15%).

- One in five of those who had experienced strains in their relationships said that their mental wellbeing had been affected, with 21% saying they had felt stressed, 5% saying they had felt anxious or insecure and 4% saying they had felt depressed.

Managing financially

- Almost half (45%) of respondents are finding it more difficult to pay their bills than was the case a year ago, with the figure rising to 55% among single parents, and 64% among those who have a child with a disability.
- Asked where they would go for help if they were struggling to pay their bills, respondents tended to mention their own parents or other relatives (29%), their bank manager (21%) or a Citizen's Advice Bureau (18%). Around a quarter (24%) said they did not know where they would go for help.
- Significant proportions of respondents said they have had to change their spending patterns due to the current economic situation. Almost half (49%) have cut back on family holidays, while around two in five have cut back on food shopping (42%) family day trips (37%), and domestic energy consumption (37%).

Childcare

- Considerably more respondents have used informal than formal childcare in the last year (75% compared with 27%); 58% have used grandparents, 41% had used other adults who live with them, and 41% other adults who are related to them but do not live with them.
- For the majority of parents (59%), the most important consideration in choosing childcare, is whether the child is familiar with the person looking after them. Other important considerations are quality (39%), flexibility (28%) and reliability (25%), followed by the proximity of the childcare (18%), the price (16%) and the times available (15%).
- The majority of parents who used formal childcare arrangements were happy with their arrangements. Most agreed that the childcare times available are convenient (88%) and that they found it easy to get a place in the childcare they use (64%). Most also *disagreed* that it was difficult to get to the childcare that

they use (80%) and that it was difficult to find out what childcare is available in their area (66%).

- Almost three quarters (74%) of parents said that they would not make any changes to their current childcare arrangements.

Nursery care

- Around three in five respondents with children who are entitled to a free nursery place said they used this entitlement, with 54% saying they use 10 hours or more per week, 5% saying they use 6 to 10 hours and 2% saying they use five hours or less.
- Perceptions of council-run nurseries were generally positive: A majority of users agreed that the times available fit with their commitments, and disagreed that the nursery sessions are not long enough and that their nursery is poor at being flexible if they are delayed in picking up their child.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report presents the findings of a survey of Scottish parents, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Parenting across Scotland.

Parenting across Scotland (PAS) is a multi-agency organisation financed by the Scottish Government with a remit to research the concerns and issues affecting parents and to identify gaps in the support available to parents. It does this by bringing together agencies that provide support to parents and families, sharing good practice and promoting a positive image of parenting.

The survey explored parents' experiences and perceptions in relation to a range of issues, including:

- the support and advice on which they draw in bringing up their children
- nursery care
- childcare
- relationship strains
- managing financially

This is the fourth such survey Ipsos MORI has conducted for PAS in recent years; previous surveys were commissioned in 2004, 2007 and 2008. While the content of the surveys has changed significantly over time, comparisons between the 2010 and 2008 findings are included in the report where appropriate.

1.1.1 Sampling

The survey sample was drawn from a database of people who have taken part in the 2009 Scottish Household Survey (SHS)¹ and stated that they would be willing to be recontacted for future research. This is a highly effective way of drawing a sample as:

¹ The SHS is a continuous survey commissioned by the Scottish Government. The survey is designed to provide accurate, up to date information about the characteristics attitudes and behaviours of households and individuals in Scotland on a range of information. More information about the survey can be found here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002>

- only 27% of households in Scotland contain dependent children; therefore considerable time and resources were saved by targeting appropriate households directly, as opposed to ‘screening’ for households containing children by means of a door-to-door survey approach.
- The SHS database includes full contact details for all those individuals included in it. This meant it was easy to get in touch with respondents, which in turn contributed to the overall efficiency of the survey process.

1.1.2 Questionnaire design

The survey questionnaire was designed by Ipsos MORI in close consultation with the PAS project manager and steering group. A copy of the questionnaire marked up with the survey results has been included in the appendices.

Although many families include more than one child, it was decided that some of the survey questions would be easier to answer, and the results more meaningful, if the focus was on one child only. Therefore, parents with more than one child were asked to think about just one of their children when answering the questions concerned. The child was randomly selected by the CATI programme at the start of the interview.

1.1.3 Survey method

The survey was conducted by telephone between 20 May and 24 June 2010. All interviews were undertaken by Ipsos MORI Telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

1.1.4 Analysis

Data tables were generated in order to facilitate sub-group analysis of the findings. For each question the results were cross-tabulated against a number of key variables, namely:

- gender of the (randomly selected) child
- age of the child
- gender of the respondent
- household structure
- working status of respondent
- whether respondent or child has a disability

- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)
- geographical location (i.e. urbanity/rurality).

1.2 Presentation and Interpretation of the data

It should be remembered at all times that the results presented in this report are based on a sample of parents and not the entire parent population so they are subject to sampling tolerances, meaning not all differences will be statistically significant. Throughout the report, differences between sub-groups are commented upon only where these are statistically significant (at the 0.05 level). A guide to statistical reliability has been provided in the appendices.

Where percentages do not sum up to 100% this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of don't know/not stated categories or multiple answers. Throughout the report, an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than one half of a per cent but more than nought, and a dash (-) represents nought.

2 Support and advice

This section looks at where parents would go for information, support and advice to help deal with problems they may face in bringing up their child. It also examines parents' awareness of different organisations that provide support and their preferred means of receiving information.

2.1 Sources of support and advice

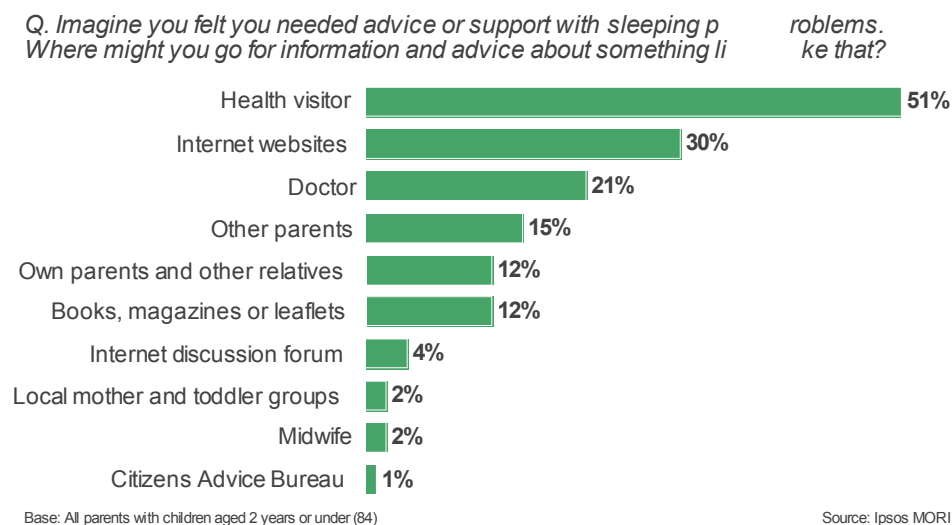
Respondents were presented with a hypothetical parenting problem, which they may or may not have encountered, and asked where they would go for information and advice about that problem. The problem with which they were presented varied depending on the age of their child.

Overall, the findings suggest that the main sources of support parents rely on are health visitors, doctors and their own parents or relatives. Parents of teenagers also rely to some extent on support from their child's school.

2.1.1 Support and advice on sleeping problems

Parents with children aged two years or younger were asked where they would go for support or advice if their child had *sleeping problems*. As figure 2.1 shows, the most common response was a health visitor, mentioned by just over half of respondents, followed by internet websites and doctors, mentioned by 30% and 21% of parents respectively. Slightly smaller proportions mentioned other parents (15%), their own parents or other relatives (12%), and books, magazines or leaflets (12%).

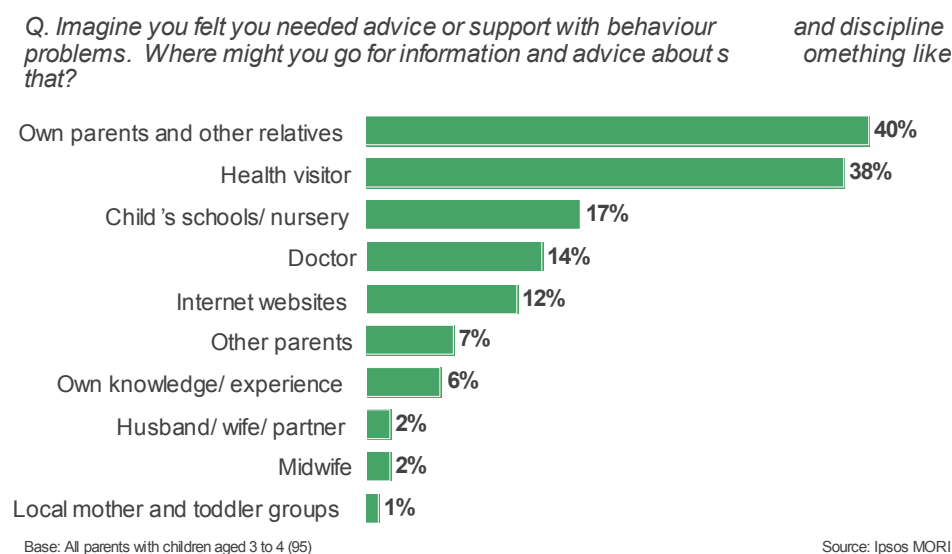
Figure 2.1: Sources of support and advice on sleeping problems



2.1.2 Support and advice on behaviour and discipline problems

Parents with children aged three to four years were asked to consider where they would go for advice or support for *behaviour and discipline problems* their child might have (figure 2.2). Respondents' own parents and other relatives was the most popular source of support, mentioned by 40% of those asked, closely followed by health visitors, mentioned by 38%. Smaller proportions mentioned schools or nurseries (17%), their doctor (14%) and internet websites (12%).

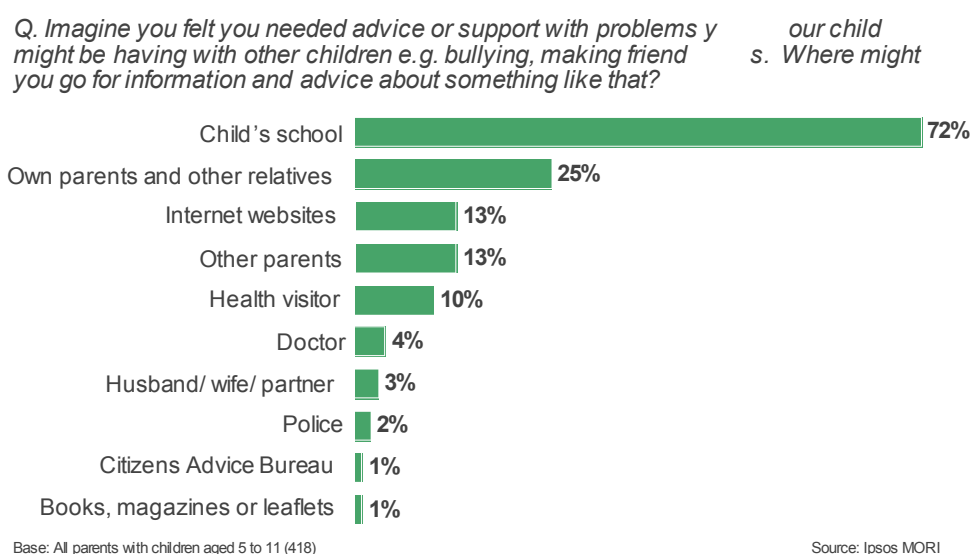
Figure 2.2: Sources of support and advice on behaviour and discipline problems



2.1.3 Support and advice on problems with other children

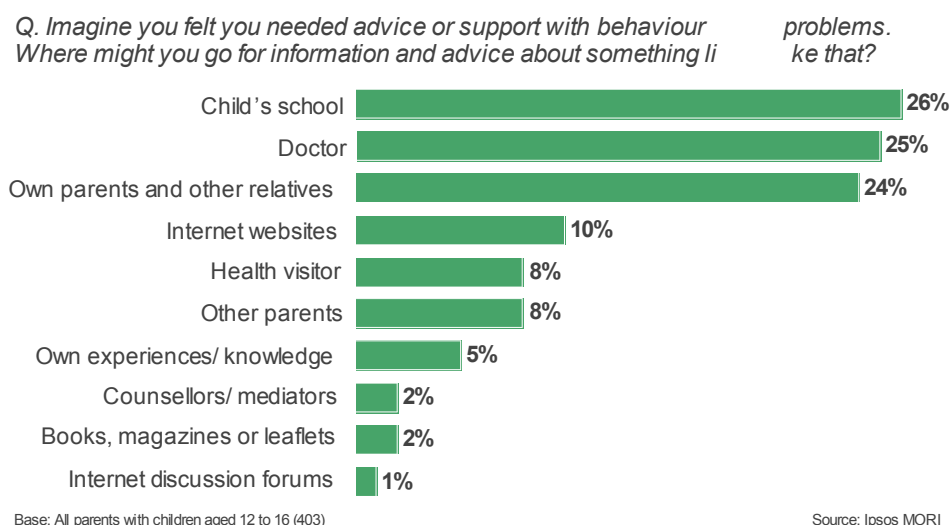
Parents of children aged five to eleven years were asked where they would go for advice or support for *problems their child might be having with other children*, for example, bullying and making friends (figure 2.3). Almost three-quarters of those asked (72%) said they would seek advice and information from their child's school, while a quarter said they would consult their own parents or other relatives. The next most commonly mentioned sources were internet websites (13%), other parents (13%) and health visitors (10%).

Figure 2.3: Sources of support and advice on problems with other children



2.1.4 Support and advice on behaviour problems

Parents of children aged 12 or older were asked where they would go for advice or support relating to *behaviour problems* their child might have (figure 2.4). In this case, respondents most commonly mentioned their child's school (26%), their doctor (25%), or their own parents and other relatives (24%). One in ten also mentioned internet websites as a source of support, while similar proportions mentioned health visitors (8%) and other parents (8%).

Figure 2.4: Sources of support and advice on behaviour problems

While these support and advice questions also featured in the 2008 survey, changes made to the questionnaire for 2010 mean the two sets of findings are not directly comparable. Still, it does appear that parents' main sources of advice and support have remained broadly consistent over the last few years. The only exception to this is that internet websites appear to be an increasingly important source of information on the full range of parenting problems covered in the questions.

2.1.5 Organisations providing information and advice

Despite the growing popularity of the internet, more than seven in ten respondents (72%) were unable to *name* any specific organisations or websites that provide information and advice to parents. The figure rises to eight in ten (82%) among those living in the most deprived areas of the country.

Focussing on the minority of respondents who were able to name an organisation or website, 4% mentioned Mumsnet and 4% Parentline. Smaller proportions mentioned Netmums, NHS Direct and the UK or Scottish Government websites (2% in each case).

Table 2.1: Awareness of organisations providing support to parents – top 10 responses

	% mentioning each organisation
Mumsnet.com	4
Parentline	4
Netmums	2
NHS Direct/NHS website	2
UK/Scottish Government website	2
Childline	1
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)	1
Bounty	1
Babycentre/Babycentre website	1
CHILDREN 1 st	1
<i>Base: All parents (1,000)</i>	

Asked how they would prefer to receive information, support and advice on parenting issues, almost half (49%) of respondents said via an internet website, while just over one in five (21%) said via booklets and leaflets. Smaller proportions mentioned local discussion or support groups (16%), a telephone helpline (10%), and CDs and DVDs (3%). These results are consistent with the findings from the 2008 survey.

Parents in the least deprived areas of Scotland were more likely than those in the most deprived areas to say they would prefer to receive information through an internet website (60% compared to 41% respectively), while parents in the most deprived areas were more likely to prefer local discussion or support groups (21% compared to 12% of those in the least deprived areas).

2.2 Perceptions of GPs

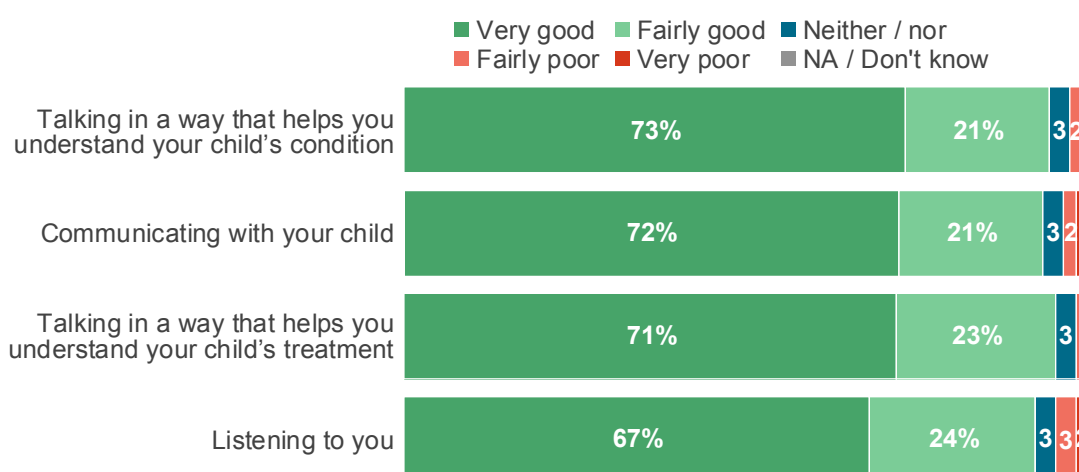
As illustrated in figures 2.1-2.4 above, GPs are an important source of information and advice for many parents. The survey included a set of questions to gauge perceptions of the information and advice provided by GPs – both in relation to health issues and parenting issues.

Around three in five (61%) of all parents surveyed said they had taken their child to see a GP for *health-related issues* in the last year, with the figure rising to 85% among parents who have a child with a disability.

For the vast majority of these parents, taking their child to the GP was a positive experience, with more than nine in 10 of them saying their doctor was good at: listening to them; communicating with their child; and talking in a way that helped them understand their child's condition and treatment (figure 2.5). Indeed, a majority rated their doctor as very good on each of these criteria.

Figure 2.5: Experiences of taking child to see doctor – health related issue

Q. Thinking about your experiences of taking your child to see a doctor, how good or poor would you say your doctor is at each of the following?



Base: All parents who have taken their child to a GP for a health-related issue in the past year (613)

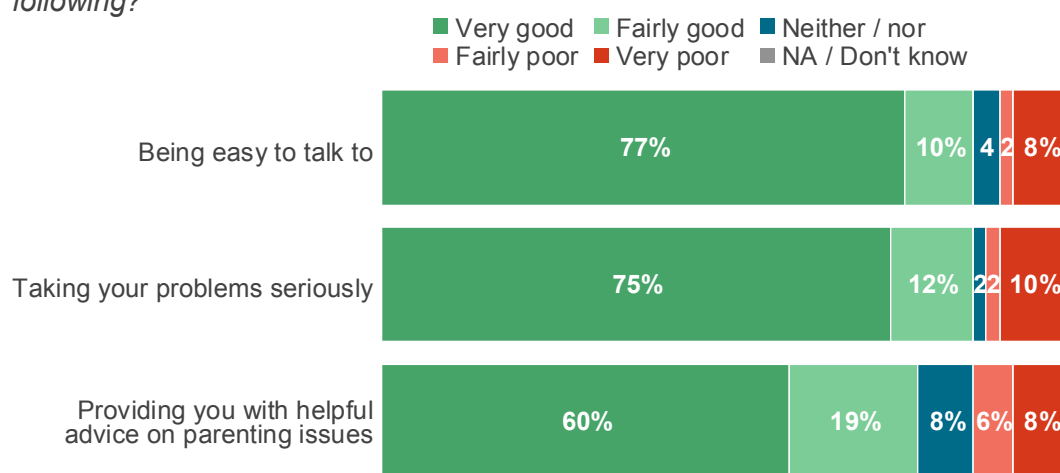
Source: Ipsos MORI

These positive views were shared by all parents, regardless of their socio-demographic background. The only notable sub-group difference in the findings was that parents of children aged two or younger were a little less likely than those with older children to rate their doctor as good at listening (84% compared with 91% overall).

Only around 5% of respondents said they had sought advice or support from a GP on *parenting-related issues* over the last year. Nonetheless, among this group experiences were again very positive, with a large majority rating their GP as good or very good in terms of being easy to talk to (87%), taking their problems seriously (87%) and providing helpful advice (79%) (figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Experiences of taking child to see doctor – parenting related issue

Q. Thinking about your experiences of seeking advice from doctors on parenting issues, how good or poor would you say your doctor is at each of the following?



Base: All parents who have sought advice from their GP on parenting issues in the past year (52)

Source: Ipsos MORI

The small sample size for this question precludes sub-group analysis of the findings.

3 Relationship strains

This section considers factors that put a strain on respondents' relationships with their partners and the effect these strains have on them and their children.

Most respondents (78%) said that they currently live with a partner, while just over one in five (22%) said they do not. However, some groups of parents were significantly less likely to live with a partner than others, namely:

- women (70% compared to 93% of men)
- those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland (59% compared to 93% of those living in the least deprived areas) ; and
- those with an older child (74% of those whose child is aged 12 to 16 years compared to 88% of those whose child is aged 2 or younger).

3.1 Causes of relationship strains

Respondents living with a partner were asked what sorts of things, if any, put a strain on their relationship with their partner. Seven out of ten (71%) respondents mentioned at least one source of strain, with the most common being money or finance issues (33%), children's behaviour or other parenting issues (27%) and work-related issues - for example, working long hours, redundancy and so on (15%). No other single source of strain was mentioned by more than 1 in 20 respondents (table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Factors that place a strain on respondents' relationship with their partner

	% mentioning each factor
Money/finance	33
Children/children's behaviour/parenting issues	27
Work related issues	15
Tiredness/lack of sleep	5
Household/domestic chores	5
Lack of time together	4
Health issues	3
Family/relative issues	2
Communication issues	1
<i>Base: All parents who live with a partner (784)</i>	

Women and respondents living in the least deprived areas of the country were more likely than other parents to say that their children's behaviour or parenting issues put a strain on their relationship with their partner (31% of women compared to 20% of men, and 37% of respondents living in the least deprived areas compared to 22% of those in the most deprived areas).

3.2 Impact of relationship strains

Respondents who identified sources of strain on their relationship were asked how these strains had affected them. Just over half (57%) said that they had not been affected at all. However, over a quarter of respondents (28%) said that their mental wellbeing had been affected, with 21% saying they had felt stressed, 5% saying they had felt anxious or insecure and 4% saying they had felt depressed. Other effects identified were trouble sleeping (4%), health problems (1%) and having to take time off work (1%).

Table 3.2: Impacts of relationship strains on parents – top 10 responses

	% mentioning each
Haven't been affected	57
Have felt stressed	21
Have felt anxious/insecure	5
Have felt depressed	4
Have had trouble sleeping	4
Have had health problems	1
Have had to take time off work	1
Have not wanted to socialise with other people	*
Have had to involve police or social work	*
Have been drinking more/taking drugs	*
<i>Base: All parents who mention an issue which puts strain on their relationship with their partner (558)</i>	

Parents with a disability were more likely than other parents to say their mental wellbeing had been affected (48% compared to 26%); in particular, they were more likely to say that they had felt stressed (38% compared to 20%) and depressed (14% compared to 4%).

Asked in what way strains in their relationship with their partner had affected their *children*, a large majority of parents (85%) said that it had not affected their children at

all or that their children were unaware of the strains. This finding should perhaps be treated with caution, however, as some parents may be unwilling to admit that their personal problems are having a negative impact on their child. Research by Childline has found that a large proportion of children's calls to their service are about parental conflict.

Focussing on the 15% of parents who felt that strains in their relationship with their partner *had* affected their children, 4% said that their children had been unhappy or crying and 4% said their children had been anxious or insecure (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Impact of relationship strains on children – top 5 responses

	% mentioning each
Hasn't affected them at all/they are not aware of strains	85
They've been unhappy/crying	4
They've been anxious/insecure	4
They've been withdrawn/quiet	1
They've not been behaving well at school	*
<i>Base: All parents who mention an issue which puts strain on their relationship with their partner (558)</i>	

Respondents most likely to say that their children had been affected in some way were those who were not working (27% compared to 12% of those working full-time) and those who have a disability (28% compared to 13% of those who do not).

Parents of children aged 12 to 16 years were more likely than average to say that their children had been unhappy or crying (7% compared to the average of 4%) as a consequence of their relationship strains, while those living in the least deprived areas were more likely than average to say their child had been anxious or insecure (8% compared to the average of 4%).

4 Managing Financially

As the previous chapter illustrated, money worries are a source of tension in a significant proportion of families. This chapter looks in more detail at how the current economic situation is affecting families. It considers how easy or difficult respondents are finding it to afford their household bills compared with a year ago, and the extent to which they have had to change their patterns of expenditure.

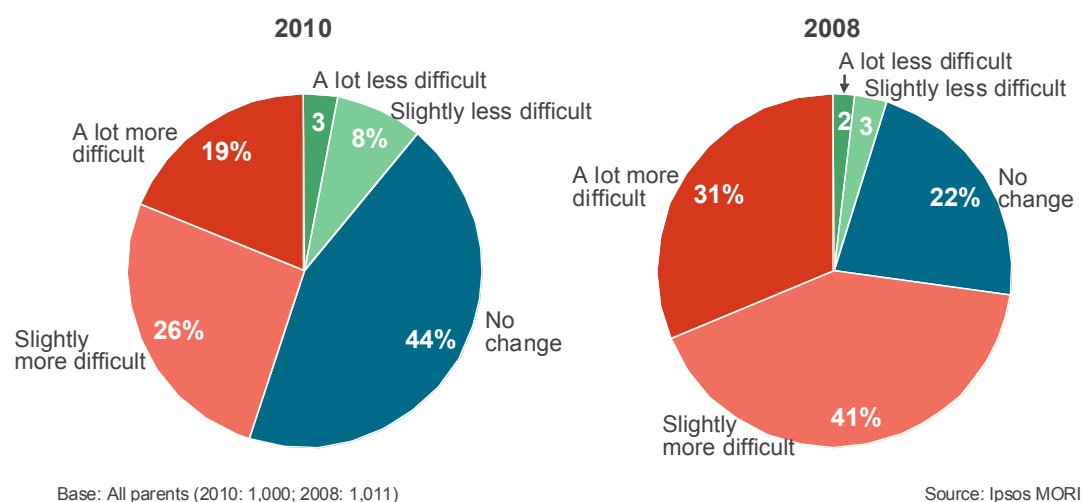
4.1 Affordability of household bills

As figure 4.1 shows, approaching half (45%) of respondents said they are finding it more difficult to afford their household bills compared with a year ago, while a similar proportion (44%) said there has been no change, and 11% said they are finding it less difficult.

While the proportion saying they are finding it more difficult to afford their bills is of concern, this figure has fallen significantly since the 2008 survey (from 72%), as the chart below illustrates. At the same time, the proportion saying there has been no change in their ability to pay their bills has doubled (from 22% to 44%). It will be interesting to repeat this question in future surveys to identify whether the latest results simply reflect short term fluctuation or mark the beginning of a trend towards greater financial security among families as the UK slowly comes out of recession – or, indeed, whether projected public sector spending cuts will have an impact.

Figure 4.1: Ease of affording bills, compared with a year ago

Q. Compared to this time last year, would you say your household finds it more or less difficult to afford all the bills your household has to pay, or has there been no change?



Notwithstanding the generally improving picture illustrated in figure 4.1, single parents and those who have a child with a disability, or who themselves have a disability, remain more likely than other parents to say they are finding it more difficult to afford their bills (table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Ease of affording bills, by household structure and disability

	More difficult	Less difficult
	%	%
All parents (1,000)	45	11
Household structure		
Two parent household (784)	42	11
Single parent household (215)	55	7
Disability		
Parent with disability (91)	53	11
Child with disability (88)	64	5

As in 2008, however, there are no differences by area deprivation suggesting financial pressures continue to affect parents across the socio-economic spectrum, not just those living in the most economically disadvantaged parts of the country.

4.2 Help with paying bills

Asked where they would go for help if their household was struggling to pay its bills, respondents tended to mention either their own parents or other relatives (29%), their bank manager (21%) or a Citizens Advice Bureau (18%). Around a quarter (24%) said they did not know where they could go for help. These results are broadly consistent with the comparable findings from the 2008 survey.

Figure 4.2: Where parents would go for help with paying bills – top 10 responses

Q. If your household was struggling to pay these bills, where would you go for help?



Base: All parents (1,000)

Source: Ipsos MORI

4.3 Spending patterns

To further explore the impact of the current economic situation on families, respondents were asked whether or not they have recently had to stop or cut back spending on particular items and activities. As table 4.2 shows, significant proportions said they *have* had to do so. Most notably, around half (49%) said they have had to stop or cut back spending on family holidays, while around two in five said the same in respect of family day trips, food shopping, domestic energy, and toys, books, DVDs or computer games for children. Smaller but by no means insignificant proportions said they have had to stop or cut back spending on out of school activities for children and on car fuel.

Table 4.2: Patterns of expenditure on key items and activities

	Had to stop	Had to cut back	Not had to stop/ cut back	Don't know/ N/A
	%	%	%	%
Family holidays	12	37	46	5
Family day trips	3	34	60	4
Food shopping	*	42	58	*
Toys, books, DVDs or computer games for children	2	38	58	2
Out of school activities for children e.g. swimming lessons, art classes etc.	2	10	73	14
Domestic energy consumption	*	37	62	*
Car fuel	1	28	61	10
Childcare	1	4	44	51
<i>Base: All respondents (1,000)</i>				

As might be expected, parents living in the most deprived areas of the country were more likely than those in the least deprived areas to say that they have had to stop or cut back on the items and activities listed. As shown in table 4.3, the differences is particularly marked in respect of:

- family day trips (46% of those in the most deprived areas have stopped or cut back compared with 27% in least deprived areas)
- food shopping (51% compared with 36%)
- toys, books, DVDs or computer games for children (52% compared with 30%)

Table 4.3: % who have had to stop or cut back spending on each area – by deprivation

	20% most deprived areas	20% least deprived areas
	%	%
Family holidays	58	50
Family day trips	46	27
Food shopping	51	36
Toys, books, DVDs or computer games for children	52	30
Out of school activities for children e.g. swimming lessons, art classes etc.	22	7
Domestic energy consumption*	44	33
Car fuel*	29	21
Childcare*	8	5
<i>Base:</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>165</i>

* For these areas of expenditure, the differences between the most and least deprived areas are not statistically significant

There was further notable variation by household structure and disability; specifically:

- Single parents, were more likely than other parents to have stopped or cut back spending on each of the items and activities listed, apart from car fuel² (table 4.4).
- Parents with a disability were more likely than those without one to have stopped or cut back spending on: family holidays; family day trips; toys book, DVDs or computer games for children; out of school activities; and domestic energy (table 4.5).
- Parents who have a child with a disability were more likely than those who do not to have stopped or cut back spending on family holidays, food shopping, out of school activities, and domestic energy (table 4.5).

² This may in part reflect the fact that single parents are less likely to own a car than other parents - according to the Scottish Household Survey 46% of single parent households do not own car, compared with just 11% of other family households.

Table 4.4: % who have had to stop or cut back spending – by household structure

	One parent household	Two parent household
	%	%
Family holidays	60	46
Family day trips	57	31
Food shopping	54	39
Toys, books, DVDs or computer games for children	60	34
Out of school activities for children e.g. swimming lessons, art classes etc.	25	9
Domestic energy consumption	48	35
Car fuel*	32	28
Childcare	9	4
<i>Base:</i>	<i>784</i>	<i>215</i>

* For this area of expenditure, the difference between the one and two parent households is not statistically significant

Table 4.5: % who have had to stop or cut back spending – by disability

	Child disability	No child disability	Parent disability	No parent disability
	%	%	%	%
Family holidays	61	48	63	48
Family day trips*	42	36	46	35
Food shopping ⁺	58	41	43	42
Toys, books, DVDs or computer games for children*	49	39	57	38
Out of school activities for children e.g. swimming lessons, art classes etc.	19	12	22	11
Domestic energy consumption	53	36	47	37
Car fuel* ⁺	31	28	33	28
Childcare* ⁺	6	5	8	5
<i>Base:</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>911</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>908</i>

* For these areas of expenditure, the differences by child disability are not statistically significant

+ For these areas of expenditure the differences by parental disability are not statistically significant

5 Childcare

The Scottish Government has identified childcare provision as vital in helping children to develop and grow, and in supporting families moving into or sustaining employment, training or education. It has therefore developed a Childcare Strategy which aims to provide affordable, good quality childcare to all children aged 0-14³. The importance of childcare is reinforced by recent research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁴, which identified a lack of access to childcare as a significant barrier to employment, particularly among single parents. The research also found that low-income families are more likely to use informal childcare arrangements, such as grandparents or other relatives, who do not qualify for Childcare Tax Credits.

Given the prominence of childcare as an issue, the survey included a series of questions on parents' use of different forms of childcare, the factors influencing their choice of childcare, and their perceptions around formal provision.

5.1 Childcare arrangements used in the last year

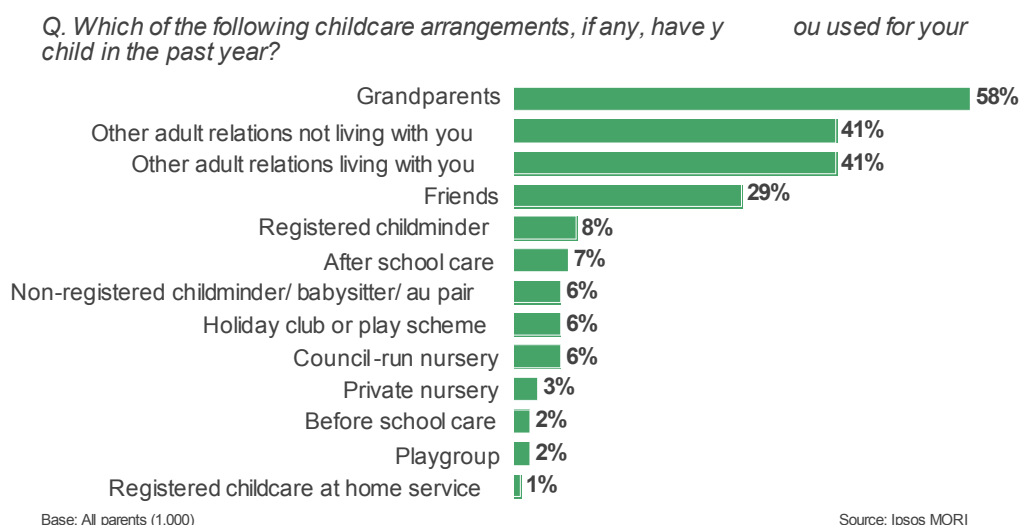
Respondents were presented with a list of childcare arrangements and asked to identify which of these they have used in the last year. The results show that the majority (75%) relied on an informal network of family and friends to care for their child, while just over a quarter (27%) use formal childcare arrangements (Figure 5.1).

Looking at the result in more detail, grandparents were the most commonly used source of *informal* childcare, mentioned by 58% of respondents. Around four in ten respondents mentioned using other adults who are related to them but do not live with them (41%) and other adults who do live with them (41%), while around three in ten mentioned using friends (29%).

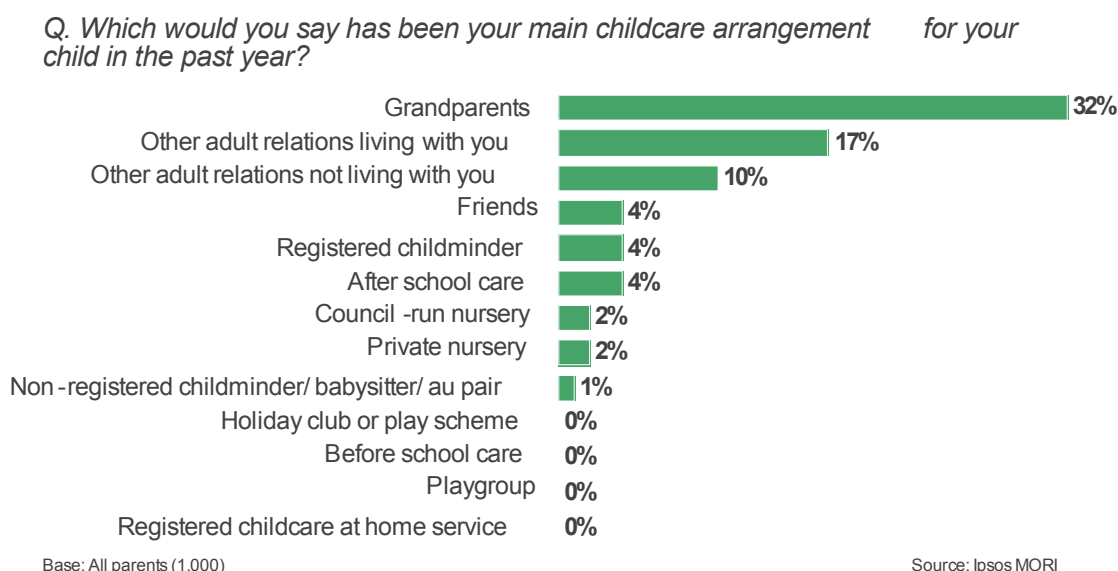
In terms of the minority of respondents who used *formal* childcare, 8% had used a registered childminder and 7% had used after-school care. Non-registered childminders, babysitters, council-run nurseries and holiday clubs or playschemes were each used by 6%.

³ Available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Education-Child-Care> [Accessed 29/7/10]

⁴ *Child poverty in Scotland: taking the next steps* (2009) Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-children-scotland-viewpoint.pdf> [Accessed 29/7/10]

Figure 5.1: Childcare arrangements used in the past year

Asked what their *main* childcare arrangement had been in the last year, respondents again most commonly mentioned informal arrangements, with almost a third (32%) mentioning grandparents, 17% mentioning other adults they live with, and 10% mentioning adults who are related to them but do not live with them. Smaller proportions mentioned other informal arrangements, including friends, a registered childminder and after-school care (4% in each case).

Figure 5.2: Main childcare arrangement used in the past year

Use of some of the arrangements listed in figure 5.2 varied among different groups of respondents. Parents whose child was aged 5 to 11 years were more likely than average to mention grandparents (36% compared to 32%) as their main source of childcare, while those whose child was aged 12 to 16 years were more likely than

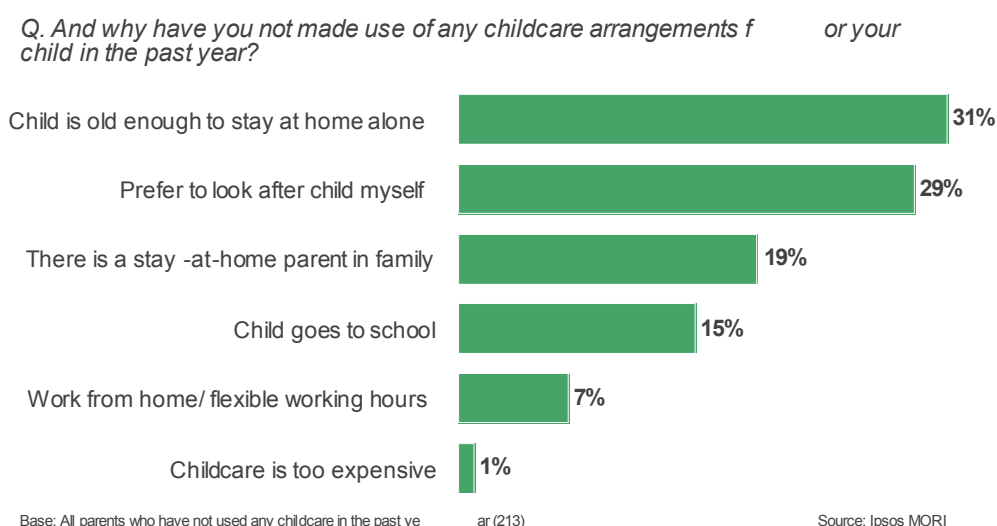
average to mention other adults who are related to them but do not live with them (12% compared to 10%).

Respondents who have a child with a disability were more likely than other parents to rely on other adults who live with them (25% compared to 17%), while those living in the most deprived areas were more likely than those in the least deprived areas to rely on adults who are related to them but do not live with them (21% compared to 4%).

5.2 Reasons for not using any childcare arrangements

Parents who had not made use of any childcare in the last year – formal or informal – were asked why this was the case. Just under a third (31%) said their child is old enough to stay at home (all of these respondents' children were aged 12 to 16 years) while a similar proportion (29%) said they prefer to look after their child themselves. Smaller proportions said that there is a stay at home parent in their family (19%), that their child is in school (15%), or that they work from home or work flexible hours (7%). One percent said that childcare was too expensive.

Figure 5.3: Reasons for not using childcare



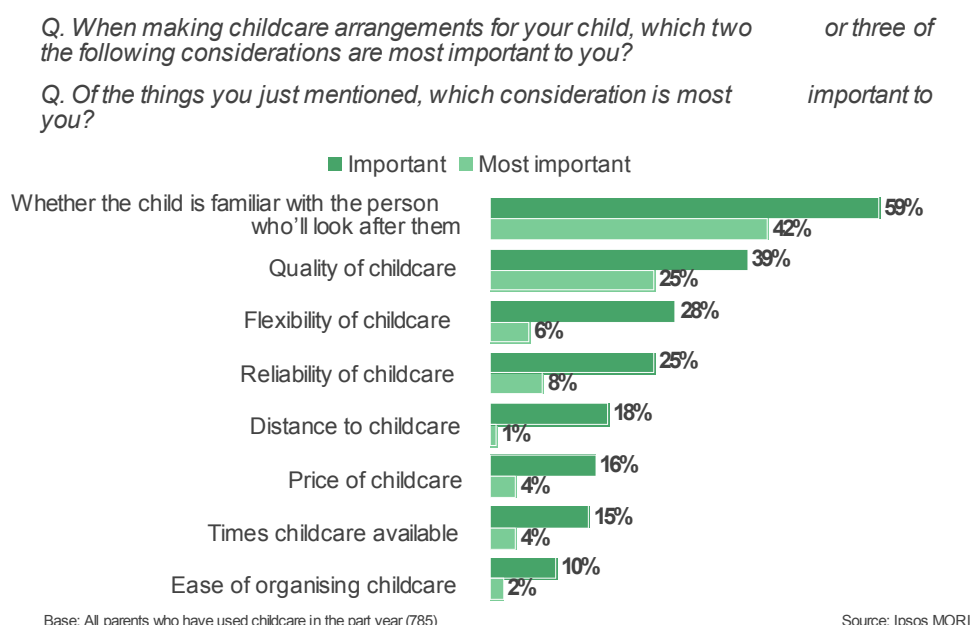
5.3 Factors influencing parents' choice of childcare

Parents who have used any form of childcare in the past year, whether formal or informal, were presented with a list of considerations that may influence their choice of arrangement and asked to select which two or three of these they regarded as most important. As Figure 5.4 shows, the most commonly mentioned factor was whether the child is familiar with the person who is looking after them (59%). This was followed by

the quality of childcare, the flexibility of childcare and the reliability of childcare (39%, 28% and 25% respectively). Considerations seen as relatively less important were the proximity of childcare (18%), the price of the care (16%), the times available (15%) and the ease of organising the care (10%).

Respondents who mentioned more than one consideration were asked which was the *most* important to them when making childcare arrangements. The most common response remained whether the child is familiar with the person who is looking after them (42%), followed by quality (25%), reliability (8%), flexibility (6%), timings (4%) price (4%) and proximity respectively (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Factors influencing parents' choice of childcare



Respondents with younger children were more likely than those with older children to identify the quality of childcare as the most important consideration (53% of respondents whose child is aged 2 or younger compared to 16% of those whose child is aged 12 to 16 years).

Parents who have a child with a disability were more likely than those who do not to prioritise the child's level of familiarity with the person who is looking after them (55% compared to 41%).

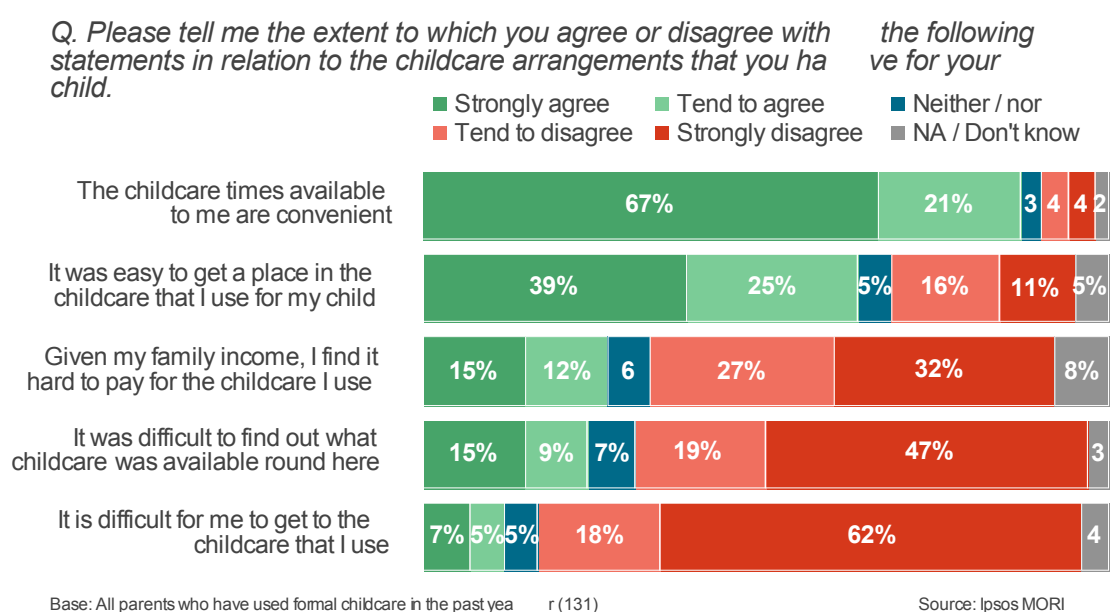
5.4 Perceptions of childcare provision

Parents who have used *formal* childcare were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about their arrangements. As

Figure 5.5 shows, the results were generally positive, with most of those asked agreeing that the childcare times available to them are convenient (88%) and they found it easy to get a place in the childcare they use (64%). Most also *disagreed* that it is difficult for them to get the childcare that they use (80%) and that they found it difficult to find out what childcare is available in their area (66%).

Views were a little less positive in respect of the statement “given my family income, I find it hard to pay for the childcare I use”. While 59% disagreed with this, over a quarter (27%) agreed.

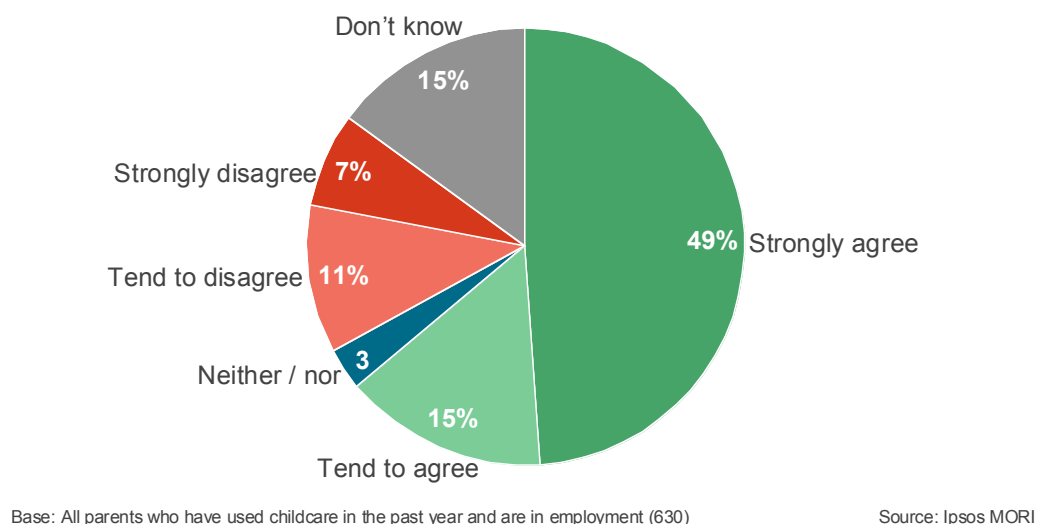
Figure 5.5: Perceptions of formal childcare provision



All respondents who were working and who had used *any* form of childcare in the past year were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “If I could afford it, I would work fewer hours so I could spend more time looking after my child”. As figure 5.6 shows, 64% agreed - 49% *strongly* so - while a total of 18% disagreed.

Figure 5.6: Working parents' preferred childcare arrangements

If I could afford it, I would work fewer hours so I could spend more time looking after my child.



Certain groups of parents were more likely to agree with the statement than others; namely:

- men (70% compared to 60% of women)
 - those working full-time (72% compared to 52% of those working part-time)
 - those with younger children (75% of those whose child is aged 2 or younger and 77% of those whose child is aged 3 to 4 years compared to 57% of those whose child is aged 12 to 16 years)
- those living in urban areas (68% compared to 52% of those living in remote rural areas).

5.5 Changes parents would make to their childcare arrangements

Parents who have used any kind of childcare arrangement in the last year were asked what changes, if any, they would make to these arrangements. Reinforcing the generally positive findings highlighted in figure 5.5, around three-quarters (74%) said that they would not make any changes.

In terms of those who *did* mention a change they would make (table 5.1), 4% said they would change the time their child spends in formal childcare, while another 4% said that they would make more use of formal childcare. Similar proportions said they would like to: work fewer hours so they could care for their child themselves (3%); pay less for childcare (3%); and have more access to childcare (3%).

Table 5.1: Changes parents would make to their childcare arrangements – top 10 responses

	% mentioning each
Change times that child spends at formal childcare	4
Make more use of formal childcare arrangements	4
Would like to work less hours and childcare myself	3
Pay less for childcare	3
More access to/availability of childcare/more of them	3
Rely less on informal childcare arrangements such as grandparents or other relatives	2
Change the type of childcare arrangement used at present	2
More flexibility	1
Would love to be full time mum	1
More childcare in the local area	1
<i>Base: All parents who have used childcare in the past year (785)</i>	

Parents of younger children were more likely than those of older children to say they would change the times that their child spends at formal childcare (9% of those whose child is aged 2 or younger compared to 1% of those whose child is aged 12 to 16 years), work fewer hours to care for their child themselves (8% compared to 1%), and pay less for childcare (9% compared to 1%).

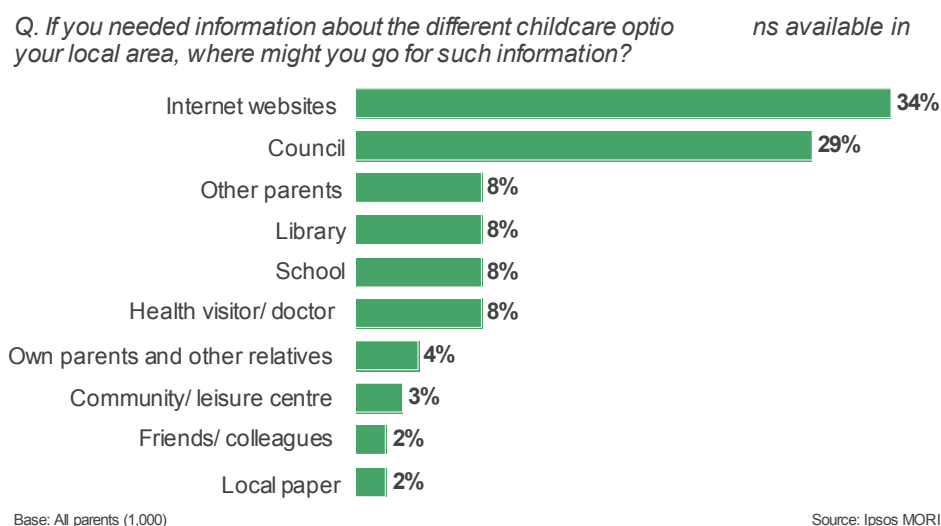
Respondents working full-time were more likely than average to say they would like to rely less on informal childcare arrangements (4% compared to 2%).

5.6 Sources of information about childcare

Respondents were asked where they would go if they needed information about childcare options in their local area. As Figure 5.7 shows, the most common response

was internet websites, mentioned by around a third of respondents (34%), followed by the local council, mentioned by 29%. Smaller proportions mentioned other sources, such as other parents (8%), a library (8%), a school (8%) and a health visitor or doctor (8%).

Figure 5.7: Where parents would go to obtain information about childcare



Parents who have a disability were less likely than those who do not to mention internet websites (13% compared to 36%), and *more* likely to mention a health visitor or doctor (13% compared to 7%).

There were also some differences depending on where respondents lived. Those living in the least deprived areas were more likely than those living in the most deprived areas to say they would use internet websites (48% compared to 28%). Meanwhile, parents living in urban areas were more likely than those in rural areas to say they would use internet websites (40% of those in large urban areas compared to 17% of those in remote rural areas), while those living in rural areas were more likely to say they would seek information from other parents (16% in remote rural areas compared to 8% in large urban areas).

6 Nursery care

Research suggests that good quality pre-school education has a significant impact on reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for children from deprived areas⁵. The Scottish Government is committed to increasing pre-school education and all three and four year olds in Scotland are now entitled to a free nursery place for up to 12.5 hours each week. In the survey, parents with children eligible for this free entitlement were asked whether they use it and, if so, how many hours they use each week. The question was put, not just to parents with children aged three or four, but also to those with a five year old. This was because eligibility for a free place is determined by the child's age at the start of the nursery term, irrespective of whether he/she turns five shortly thereafter.

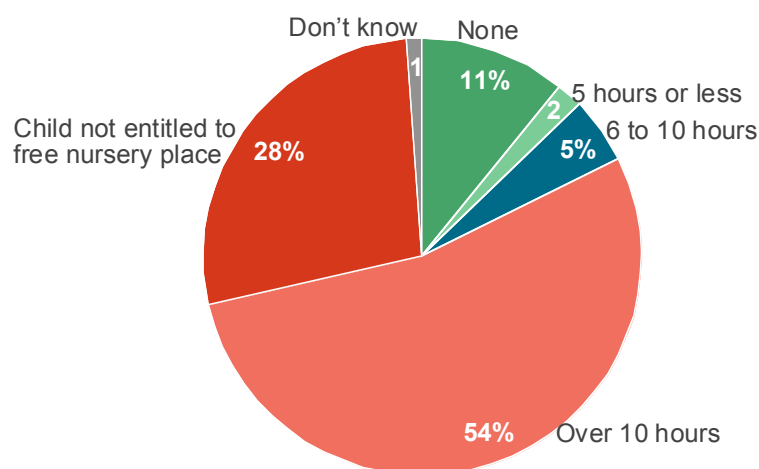
6.1 Uptake of free nursery places for 3 and 4 year olds

As figure 6.1 shows, 61% of those asked said that they make use of a free nursery place, with 54% saying they use 10 hours or more hours, 5% saying they use 6 to 10 hours and 2% saying they use five hours or less. Just 11% said they do not use the free hours at all and a further 28% said that their child is not entitled to a free nursery place. Of the latter group of respondents, over half (58%) had a five year old so it may indeed be the case that their child was no longer eligible for the entitlement. However, the remainder were parents of three or four year olds which perhaps points towards low awareness or understanding of the scheme among this group.

⁵ Sylva, K. et al (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report*, Nottingham: DfES.

Figure 6.1: Use of free nursery places for 3 and 4 year olds

Q. All three and four year olds are entitled to a free nursery place for up to 12.5 hours each week. Do you use this entitlement and, if so, how many free hours do you currently use each week?



Base: All parents of children aged 3 – 5 (149)

Source: Ipsos MORI

The small proportion of parents (16 people) who stated explicitly that they do not use the free entitlement were asked why this was the case. A quarter (4 people) felt that their child was too young for nursery, and a similar proportion said that they were not aware they were entitled to a free nursery place. One person said that there were no available places at the nursery for the times they would prefer, another said nursery times are inflexible, and another that they do not want their child to be in nursery for any longer than he/she currently is.

6.2 Perceptions of council provided nursery places

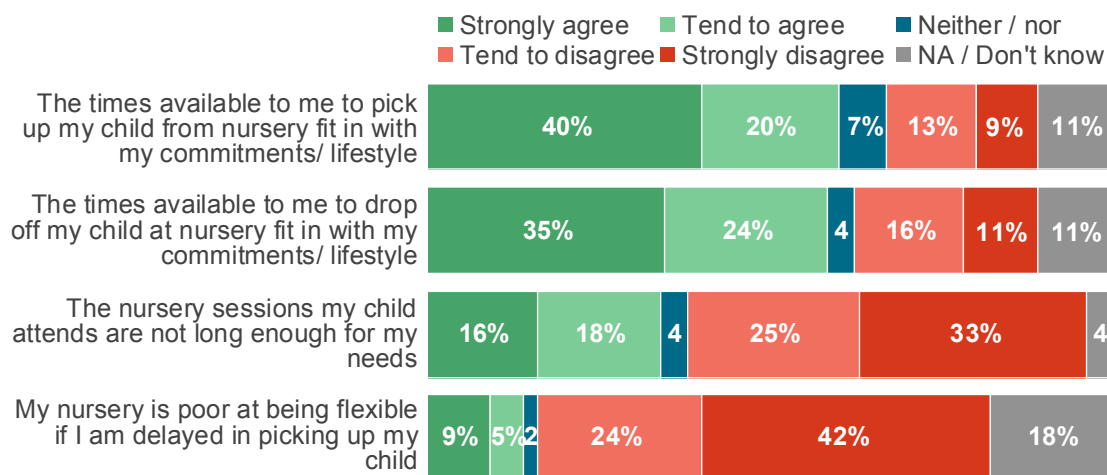
Parents who use a *council run* nursery were presented with a list of statements about this provision and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each. As figure 6.2 shows, the results were mainly positive with a majority of those asked:

- agreeing that the times available to drop off and pick up their child fit with their other commitments; and
- disagreeing that the nursery sessions their child attends are not long enough, and that their nursery is poor at being flexible if they are delayed in picking up their child.

Still there is clearly some room for improvement in council run nursery services. In particular, the fact that over a third (34%) of those asked said the sessions are not long enough points toward a significant level of unmet demand for extended provision.

Figure 6.2: Perceptions of council provided nursery care

Q. Thinking about your current nursery arrangements for your child, to what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



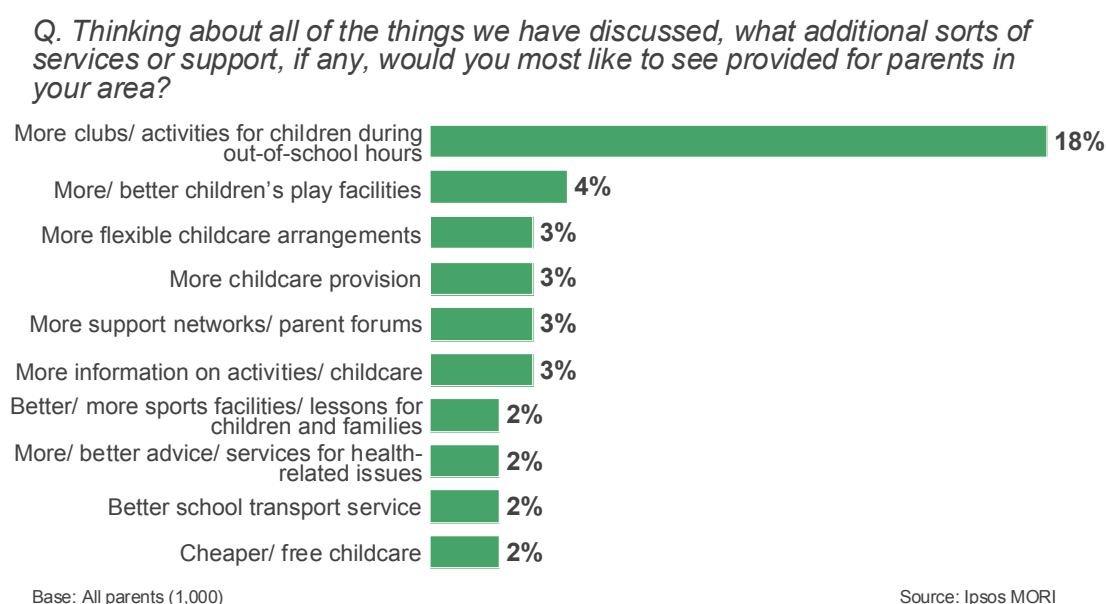
Base: All parents who use a council-run nursery (55)

Source: Ipsos MORI

7 Additional services and support

At the close of the survey, parents were asked what additional services or support they would most like to see provided for parents in their area. As is typical in this type of open ended question, a very wide range of responses were given; indeed, no single response was mentioned by more than one in five people. However, and as figure 7.1 shows, the most common responses were: more clubs and activities for children during out of school hours (18%); more or better play facilities for children (4%); more flexible childcare provision (3%); and increased childcare provision (3%). Around a third of parents (32%) declined to give a response to this question, while 15% said they did not think *any* additional services or support were needed.

Figure 7.1: Demand for additional services and support for parents



There were relatively few sub-group differences in the findings, although it was notable that parents in the most deprived areas were more likely than those in the least deprived areas to mention clubs and activities for children during out of school hours (25% compared with 13% respectively). Additionally, parents who have a child with a disability were more likely than those who do not to mention improved advice or services for health related issues (14% compared with 2% respectively) and better school transportation services (9% compared with 4% respectively).

Appendix A: Statistical reliability

The respondents to the survey are only a sample of the total 'population'. We cannot therefore be certain that the results are exactly those we would have obtained if everybody had been interviewed (the 'true' values). However, we can predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given.

The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. Table A1 below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentages results at the '95% confidence interval', based on a random sample.

Table A1: Predicted ranges for different sample sizes at the 95% confidence interval

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
Survey result:	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
<i>Sample size:</i>			
100 interviews	+/-6	+/-9	+/-10
200 interviews	+/-4	+/-6	+/-7
300 interviews	+/-3	+/-5	+/-6
500 interviews	+/-3	+/-4	+/-4
1,000 interviews	+/-2	+/-3	+/-3

For example, on a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1,000 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary by more than three percentage points, plus or minus from a complete coverage of the entire population using the same procedures. However, while it is true to conclude that the "actual" result (95 times out of 100) lies anywhere between 47% and 53%, it is proportionately more likely to be closer to the centre of this band (i.e. at 50%).

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results from different parts of a sample or results from different samples. A difference, in other words, must be of at least a certain size to be considered statistically significant. Table A2 is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons. It shows, for example, that when comparing data from the 2008 and 2010 surveys for a question were around 10% of

people gave a particular answer, a difference of three percentage points is necessary for that difference to be statistically significant.

Table A2: Predicted ranges for different surveys or sub-groups at the 95% confidence interval

Survey result:	Differences required for significance at or near percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
<i>Size of sample being compared:</i>			
1,011 and 1,000 <i>(total sample for 2008 vs. total sample for 2010)</i>	3	5	5
911 and 88 <i>(no child disability vs. child disability)</i>	7	10	11
784 and 215 <i>(two parent household vs. single parent household)</i>	5	7	8
165 and 130 <i>(20% least deprived areas vs. 20% most deprived areas)</i>	8	11	12