

Appendix 3 Childminder responses

This document contains the results from the completed surveys returned from Childminders in the Wokingham borough

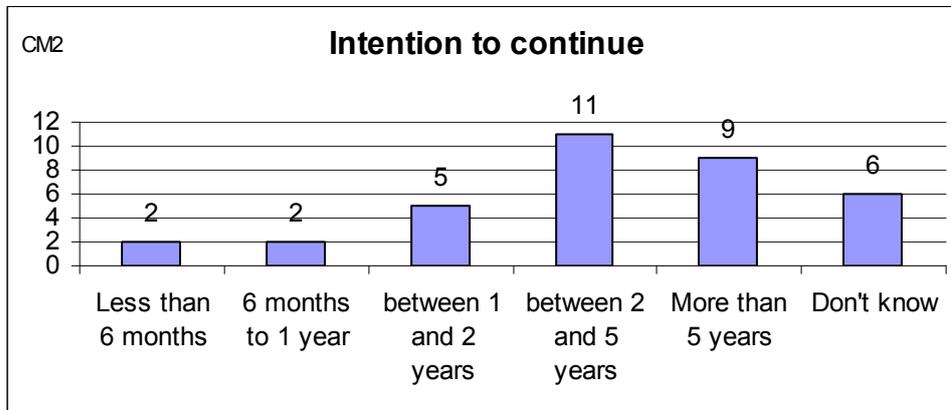
Respondents make up

Postcodes covered.	RG2, RG4, RG5, RG6 RG7, RG40, RG41, RG45
35 responses representing 13% of those Childminders publicly sharing their details	
325 Childminders registered, 52 non public leaving 273 public.	

Time in profession

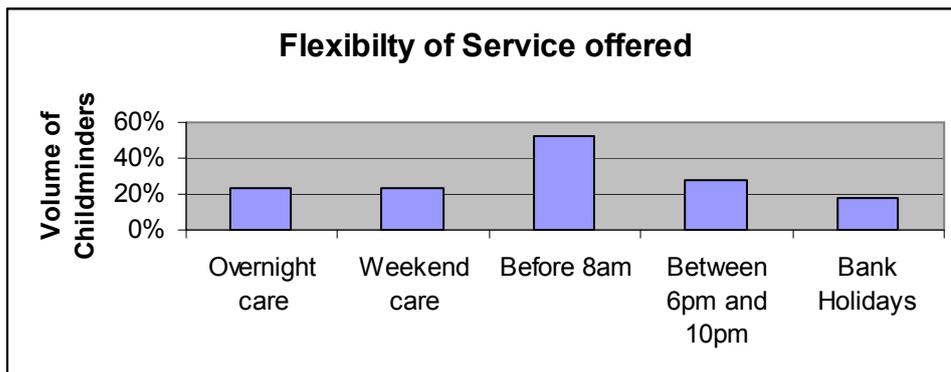
17% under 12 months; 43% between 1yr – 5 yrs; 40% more than 5 yrs

11% felt they will continue for the next 12 months; 46% between 1-5
26% more than 5 years; 17% didn't know

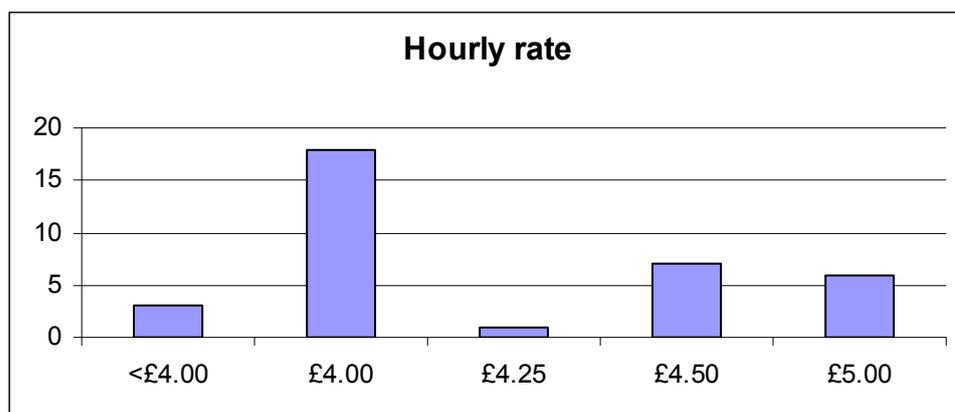


60% Confident their business is sustainable over the next 1 to 2 years with an even split of the remaining 40% disagreeing or unsure

Type of Service offered – generally 10 hours per day, less than 5% operating term time only



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Fees

51% are charging £4.00; 9% less than £4 40% over £4.00 Average cost £4.15

72% have increased their fees over the last 2 years, 28% more than 2 yrs ago, 20% between Aug 2010 – Feb 2011; 52% in the last year,

23% will increase during the period March 2011 – Sep 2011; 43% during 12 months from Oct 2011, 23% didn't know, remainder not for at least another 12-24 months

Take up of service

Not all childminders use all registered places.

We asked how many registered places they make available

Registered Places	No. of CM's	Places available	CM's	Places Offered	Places occupied - by age range	Part time	Full time
2 places	3	6	3	6	Aged 0-2 years	48	15
3 places	5	15	9	27	Aged 3-4 years	48	13
4 places	5	20	7	28	Aged 5-7 years	58	3
5 places	11	55	8	40	Aged 8-10 years	22	2
6 places	11	66	8	48	Aged 11-14 years	4	4
	35	162	35	149	Total:	217	37

43% take up Free entitlement with other provider

28% of those registered for 5 and 6 places did not offer full capacity resulting in 8% being 'ghost' places as they will never be filled. As only a percentage of childminders responded to the survey we are unable to ascertain how many of those 273 childminders how display their details publically via Family Information Service are registered operate as above in order to establish the scale of the problem.

Vacancies

At the time of the survey 9% of respondents had no vacancies, whilst 34% stated it took more than three months to fill their vacancies when they occurred. A further 34% believed it took less than three months to fill with the remaining 22% not responding to the question.

Advertising their Service

Of the mediums used to advertise 'Word of mouth' is the most popular and successful according to childminders with 77% advocating this method with the remaining 37% using a variety of other methods, with over half using the Family Information Service as their main outlet. Generally, 80% of childminders agreed that FIS provides a comprehensive source of information to parents and carers, with the remaining 20% unsure.

Demand

40% of childminders responding offered and maintained a waiting list, with a total of twenty children being on a waiting list at the time of the survey. Of these 50% were children under one year of age. 38% were of pre school age (approximately three years of age) with the remaining 12% were of school age (5 years plus).

64% of childminders reported that the majority of children on the waiting list took up these places with no trend as to the average time on the waiting list prior to a space being available. With the majority being less than one year of age, once a child moves into the older ranges a place could then be offered. On some occasions twins were accommodated through flexibility of Ofsted granting permission to vary registration requirements.

89% had maintained an occupancy rate of over 50% during the twelve month period from February 2010 through to January 2011. The remaining 11% reporting that occupancy was less than half for the same period. However, this has to be taken into context of registered places childminders are choosing to offer as opposed to the maximum number of their registered places, which they could offer.

When asked if there were any particular periods when they are more likely to have vacancies it varied. Some respondents felt that this was the start of the school/academic year in September. Usually if an older child was moving between schools because they were out of the catchment area for their school or transition from Primary to Secondary and not longer needed 'childcare'. Alternatively, it may be due to a child taking up a school nursery place as it was then free. Additionally some childminders experienced a change when a child became eligible for the free entitlement and took up a place in a pre school as parents did not pay a childminder when the child was not in their care, from 9-11:30 or Noon for example. (Varies depending on how the provider is offering the free entitlement) However, in cases where a childminder has the child prior to the session beginning therefore was responsible for dropping off and picking up at the preschool did receive payment for that time.

Others felt they nearly always have vacancies for school children during the school holidays as some children were only with the childminder term time.

Although a number of childminders have noticed they are only providing care for a maximum of 18 months due to the pattern of extended maternity leave arrangements some parents take up. Additionally a small number commented on the fact that

children often went into Pre School six to twelve months prior to them becoming eligible for the free entitlement. It is unknown whether this may be due to a parent's working arrangements or a way of a parent securing a place in order for the child to make an automatic transition to the free entitlement with that provider.

Changes in demand

Childminders were asked if they anticipated any changes in demand for their service. Approximately 20% felt there would be a decrease in demand for either places in general or full time places. Whilst there were some feeling the impact of single point of entry and option for children to enter school the term after their fourth birthday, there were also a range of other factors.

With an increase in demand for part time places in response to parents variable working patterns along with the expectation regarding charges. (Hourly versus sessional fees). Many felt the care they offered was increasingly being shared with family members such as grandparents or had decreased due to "many people work from home or reduced hours due to work situations" or a number of shift workers enquiring which was harder for them to accommodate as care is "not on set days and one child on shift takes up a whole space".

Yet another provider reported that there "Seems to be less demand, never had an enquiry for weekend care even though I advertise vacancies for weekend or shift work". There is clearly a geographical influence impacting some providers when it comes to parent's choice and meeting needs.

Several providers reported that enquiries had decreased with others has seen an increase and parents were less interested in the outcomes from Ofsted inspections even "if you have had a complaint or inadequate". There were others, that despite advertising not vacancies with FIS still received enquiries for places 'just in-case' circumstances had changed.

Whilst 30% anticipated no changes in their service the remaining 70% felt there would be some type of change. Over 60% felt confident and able to respond to changes in a variety of ways from making more places available, to extending age range and hours as a way of offering more flexibility.

Free Entitlement

With 43% of the 3 & 4 year olds in their care were accessing up to 15 hours Free entitlement elsewhere some childminders were just not interested in this. However 60% of childminders would consider offering this as part of their service, although a total 29% were unsure as to whether it was really an option. Main reasons for this were the financial aspect, and the difference between this and their current rates; the restrictions and constraints it may put on their business operation if parents were to just access the free hours and no extended care. This alongside their own family needs and commitments meant that until they received more information about what it entailed they could not make a decision. However, it is encouraging to know the development potential which exists and how it can be addressed.

Some of the reasons behind responses are:-

“ I believe a child needs to mix in larger groups of own age as well as a childminder so not good for child in an area like here where plenty of pre school nursery places”

“I would need to understand more about how this affects my offering and how payment would work. It is not something I would necessarily discount would just need more information”

“I would love to be able to do this. I am a network childminder and I would love to be able to provide government funded childcare as network minders do in other areas.”

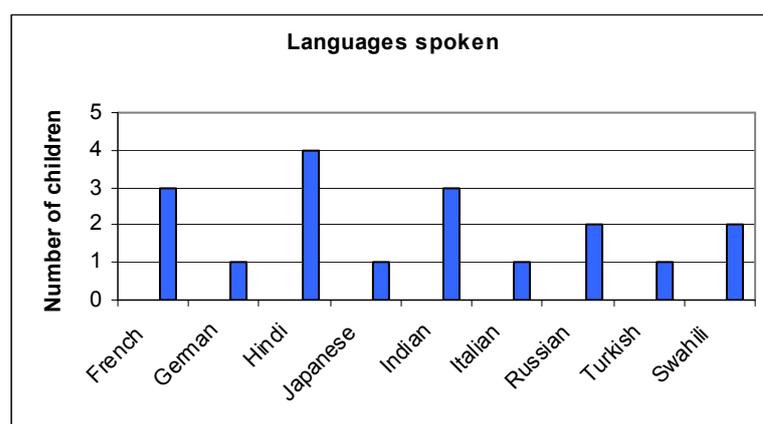
Meeting individual needs

At the time the survey was carried out only 17% of respondents had a total of nine children in their care identified as having specific individual needs, one of whom had identified complex needs and of these eight children were under four years of age and one of compulsory school age.

Whilst some felt ‘general’ training around inclusion and support would be useful the majority felt confident in meeting any child’s needs, although some felt that as they had never had such an enquiry it was difficult to respond. One responding stating that “until the child presents with a known complex needs, I don’t know the answer”.

23% were not aware of whether the child was subject to an Individual education plan (IEP) or were supported through Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus with the remaining 77% choosing not to respond. It could be that no children in their care this applied to therefore they did not feel a need to respond; equally they may have been familiar with the terminology.

The diversity of language and culture of the children cared for by childminders is extensive.



26% of childminders stated they had sixteen children with English as an additional language, 38% of those children were of statutory school age.

The linguistic ability of childminding professionals is also extensive, with 17% of childminders responding or their assistants being fluent in French, German and Afrikaans

Support, Training and Qualifications

Of those responding 66% completed the Ofsted Self Evaluation Form (SEF) online as a means to evaluating and improving quality and practice. Although there is no legal qualification requirement to be a childminder, of those responding to the survey over 50% had some form of recognised childcare qualification.

	Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)	NEEB	Foundation Degree in Early Years	Council for Awards Care Health Education Level 1 (CACHE)	NVQ4 x 5%
NVQ3 20%	5%	8%	8%	5%	

Nevertheless, childminders in general felt the best way to support the provision of quality childcare was to provide practical support for childminders, in the form of advice and guidance on business issues. Mainly encompassing legal requirements, marketing, resources, record keeping, taxation etc. with a number of respondents highlighted a need to have equal access to resources as with preschools, or in particular children's centres.

As one respondent asserted "there is understandably a great deal of emphasis on children's needs and indeed on families' childcare needs. However, there seems to be little appreciation that additional demands on childminders translate into more pressure on childminders' own families and often lead to the conclusion that childminding is not a sustainable business or lifestyle."

This would appear to sum up a variety of feelings around expectations in diversifying there service to meet needs and demands of the childcare sector and government initiatives

When asked to assess their training needs an assortment of was highlighted, some of which was readily available or under development by the Early Years Childcare & Play Workforce Development team. These include

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

Working with children learning English as an additional language

Disability Discrimination Act

Risk assessment/accessibility planning

Developing the home learning & play environment

Working in Partnership with Parents & other professionals

SEN Code of Practice / Inclusive Practice/Early Support

Transition planning for children with a disability or SEN Special disabilities or needs

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Those not attending training or other support events gave a mixture of reasons for not taking this up

Not enough time. Working 50+ hours per week plus paperwork

A lot of training is a repeat of what I have done in the past and I keep myself up to date with magazines, newspapers,

Courses quite expensive as starting out

I did the NVQ3, 3 years ago and found this very informative on childcare. Meetings attended in the past have taken too long.

I have done less training in the last 12 months can't afford it as my husband was made redundant

As my husband works away from home a lot I would have to pay for childcare at weekends and in the evening. Would prefer online training

I would prefer to have more courses on line. I have completed CAF on line and will do refresher safeguarding and also food hygiene. I attend toddler groups and mix with other minders and talk about changes that are happening in childcare.

94% of respondents confirmed they attended training as well as 51% attending Conferences and 69% attending Local Authority briefings/information session or Network meetings.

Those that did attend training believed that it improved the outcomes for those children in their care. Examples given in support of this are:-

- I constantly learn new things
- I have not been a childminder before and need to built up my profession
- More information means better practice
- Improved my procedures and outlook

As one childminder commented

“Better knowledge surely means you can deal with situations with children and parents in a more professional manner. Training also gives you a confidence to deal with these things because you can back it up with facts”

What the Childminders say about childcare provision generally

Whilst 20% agreed the development of new childcare took existing service into account; 9% disagreed with this, often seeing this as unnecessary 'increased competition', but the remaining 72% unaware or unable to say whether or not this happened.

54% agreed or strongly agreeing that there is sufficient childcare provision to meet the needs of parents and carers locally, whilst 14% disagreed with this, 31% were unsure. Finally, 66% did not feel there was a saturation of childcare locally with 11% feeling there was this left the remaining 23% unsure or unconcerned.