

# PACEY response to the Consultation on Surveys on Childcare and Early Years in England

## The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents (CEYSP)

### Please tell us:

a) **How you make use of the survey data and what it influences or informs;**

As the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), our overall aim is for all children to experience high quality childcare and early learning. We support our 30,000 members provide first-rate provision through training, resources, advice and peer support, and we champion the vital role they play in helping prepare children for a bright future. The *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents* (CEYSP) is the key means of understanding how parents use and perceive childcare and early education in England, and, crucially, how this is changing over time. Childcare providers need to understand parents' needs in order to provide a high quality, accessible and affordable service.

b) **What data you make most use of**

All of the data in the survey is valuable, but we make most use of the questions on childcare usage (particularly informal versus formal childcare, as this is not covered by any other Official Statistics), as well as parental views on childcare accessibility, affordability and quality. The section on government-funded support for childcare is also increasingly important, as this has greatly expanded in recent years.

c) **How you anticipate making use of the data in the future.**

We expect to continue to use the data in much the same way in the future.

### **What are your views on the frequency of the survey up to 2020 and after 2020?**

We welcome the Department's commitment to conduct annual surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020. It is particularly important given the fact that this period coincides with the roll-out of a number of new programmes of support for childcare, including 30 hours, Tax Free Childcare and the childcare element of Universal Credit. Our preference would be for annual surveys to continue in the future. However, assuming there haven't been any significant changes to childcare policy and/or parental entitlements, we would support biennial or potentially even triennial surveys if this meant that they could include larger sampling sizes and increased potential for disaggregation by region, local authority and social grade.

### Please tell us your views on:

a) **The current sample frames used for the survey;**

No response

b) **The suitability and robustness of alternative sample frames such as the Postcode Address File;**

No response

- c) **The impact any changes introduced to the sample frames would have on your use of the statistics.**

No response

**Please tell us:**

- (a) **Your views on the current sample coverage of the survey (parents of children aged 0-14) and our proposal to change the sample coverage to focus on parents of pre-school children.**

We support the proposal to allow for a larger sample of parents of pre-school parents to better understand their needs during this critical period, and the impact of government-funded entitlements in particular. A larger sample size of parents of children aged 0 to 4 would allow for useful disaggregation, for example by region, local authority and social grade, which would provide greater and much-needed insight into the childcare needs of parents of young children.

However, it is absolutely vital that the childcare use of parents of school-age children (5-14) continues to be captured by Official Statistics. Families' childcare needs certainly do not subside when a child enters formal schooling, and for many they become more complex due to the fact that school days and holidays do not align with most parents' working lives.

- (b) **What alternative approaches could be used for collecting data about parents of children aged 5-14 of statutory school age?**

We would support surveying parents of school-age children on a biennial or triennial basis after 2020 and/or using alternative sample frames/survey modes, as long as they are shown to be statistically robust.

- (c) **How any changes to sample coverage would influence your use of the statistics should changes be introduced from 2019 onwards.**

No response

**Please tell us:**

- a) **Your views on the current survey mode and potential alternative collection modes;**

In our view the survey of parents of 0-4 year-olds should continue to be conducted face-to-face, in view of the importance of childcare for this age group, and the complex intersection of a number of different government entitlements. Robust Official Statistics in this area are crucial to ensure that public investment in childcare and early years is being targeted as effectively as possible.

- b) **Your views on conducting a mode experiment to pilot alternative collection modes;**

We are supportive of the piloting of alternative collection modes for some areas of the survey, and for parents of school-age children.

- c) **The likely impact of any changes to the survey mode on your use of the survey statistics.**

No response

**What are your suggestions, if any, for:**

a) **Additional topics the survey could cover?**

No response

b) **Amends that would improve the survey?**

We would like to see the sections on the cost of childcare and financial sources of support improved and made more robust. The former should be based on concrete evidence, rather than solely parental perceptions, and the latter needs also to consider in more detail the use and impact of government-funded support such as Tax Free Childcare and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit/Universal Credit.

We also request that the survey no longer count non-resident parents (ex-husband/wife/partners) as informal childcare. This is incorrect and distorts our understanding of informal childcare.

c) **Deletions from the survey?**

No response

**What are your ideas, if any, for how we could improve the survey outputs, key products and dissemination of results?**

In our view you have largely struck the right balance and the existing outputs are sufficient. We would like to see continued publication of the technical report.

However, we would strongly support linking the data if possible to other early years datasets, notably the *Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers* and *Provision for children under five years of age*, to allow for deeper analysis.

We would also like to see further breakdown by region and social grade where possible, as the accessibility and affordability of childcare can vary widely on these grounds.

## The Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP)

**Please tell us:**

a) **How you make use of the survey data and what it influences or informs;**

As the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), we support our 30,000 members provide first-rate provision through training, resources, advice and peer support. The *Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers* (SCEYP) is an important means of understanding the childcare and early years workforce, and, crucially, how it is changing over time. This enables us to meet our members' needs and our underlying aim of ensuring all children experience high quality childcare and early learning.

b) **What data you make most use of;**

All of the data in the survey is useful, but we make most use of the questions on number of staff, workforce qualifications, spare capacity, cost of providing childcare and income. The section on the funded entitlement is also increasingly valuable.

c) **How you anticipate making use of the data in the future.**

We expect to continue to use the data in much the same way in the future. However, if the survey is improved (see suggestions below), then we will be able to make substantially more use of it than we do currently.

**What are your views on the frequency of the survey up to 2020 and after 2020?**

We welcome the Department's commitment to conduct annual surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020. It is particularly important given the fact that this period has coincided with the roll-out of a number of new programmes of support for childcare, including 30 hours and Tax Free Childcare, as well as significant changes to several early years qualifications. Our preference would be for annual surveys to continue in the future. However, assuming there haven't been any significant changes to childcare policy and workforce requirements in particular, we would support biennial or potentially even triennial surveys if this meant that they could include larger sampling sizes and increased potential for disaggregation by provider type, region and local authority.

We also recommend aligning the provider and parents surveys to provide for a deeper analysis and understanding of the state of childcare and early years in England.

**Do you agree we should exclude reception providers from the survey after 2018? Please explain the reason for your answer.**

No.

We understand the reasoning behind the proposal, as reception providers do differ from other early years providers in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector in a number of ways, notably the way in which they are funded and the ratios under which they are permitted to operate. In spite of these differences, they remain a vital part of the early years workforce, which is unified in its delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Excluding reception providers from the survey would limit its usefulness in providing a full picture of the childcare and early years workforce in all its complexity.

**Do you agree we should restrict the survey to cover wraparound care providers for children in the early years age range rather than 0-18 years? Please explain your answer.**

Yes.

It is important for the Department to continue to collect data on wraparound and holiday care for school-age children, but the data collected in the current survey is currently not very useful due to the limited sample sizes. We recommend that the Department consider more targeted efforts to gather this data, for example through a smaller, specific survey of holiday and wraparound care providers.

**Do you agree we should restrict the survey to cover holiday care providers for children in the early years age range rather than 0-8 years? Please explain your answer.**

Yes. See above.

**What are your views on options for refining the sample coverage of the survey to focus on early years provision? Do you favour option a or b outlined on page 16?**

As explained above, we would strongly prefer to keep reception providers in the survey.

If we had to choose between the two options, Option B is preferable, as it is important to keep track of the growing numbers of summer-born children who delay, skip or defer their reception year.

**Do you agree with the proposal to change the collection method to a mixed mode (online or telephone survey) from 2019, pending the outcome of the mode experiment in 2018? Please explain your answer.**

It is positive that a new approach is being trialled before being rolled out. If it is found to have no or only a negligible effect on the results, we would support the move to an online or telephone survey. In addition to being a more efficient use of resources, it has the added benefit of also being more convenient for most childcare providers.

**What are your suggestions, if any, for:**

a) **Additional topics the survey could cover?**

**Training/CPD:** Additional questions related to training and CPD would be very useful, such as the number of CPD hours done per year, and what training is done.

b) **Ofsted grade:** It would be useful to be able to link the data to the provider's most recent Ofsted grade.

c) **Amends that would improve the survey?**

**Categories of providers:** It is confusing that the survey uses different categories of providers than other government statistics on childcare and early years, notably the *Provision for children under five years of age* and Ofsted's termly statistics on childcare providers and inspections. These should be harmonised as far as possible.

**Spare capacity:** The questions on spare capacity should be amended to include the age range of the child, as this can vary greatly for group settings in particular.

**Qualifications:** The questionnaire asks for a breakdown of the different level 6 qualifications achieved by staff (Early Years Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Qualified Teacher Status or other Early Years Degree), but this information is not readily available in the reports or accompanying tables. It should be.

**Costs and income:** Providers should be asked to give their cost per hour by age of child, so that this can be compared to the local authority funding rate for government-funded provision.

**Childminding assistants:** The survey questionnaire should not restrict the number of assistants a childminder can record to two, as some have more than this working on a part-time basis.

**Childminders and related children:** The survey should ask how many of a childminders' own children attend the setting, and their ages, as well as the number of other related children in their setting and their ages. This is to allow greater understanding of the number of childminders affected by the ban on providing funded places to children.

d) **Deletions from the survey?**

No response

**What are your ideas, if any, for how we could improve the survey outputs, key products and dissemination of results?**

The survey outputs are adequate, and we would prefer for the detailed research report to be retained if possible.

We would like to see further breakdown by region and local authority where possible, as the availability, type and quality of provision can vary widely on these grounds.

The survey data is currently not linked to other major datasets, such as *Provision for children under five years of age*. The Department should therefore explore the possibility of linking the data to other early years datasets to allow for deeper analysis.