

In December 2015, parents of children enrolled in nursery were sent a questionnaire about the current and future provision of Early Learning and Childcare in Orkney. 116 questionnaires were returned. There were responses from virtually every area of Orkney. We asked a number of questions.

Are you happy with your child's nursery and is it convenient to use your local nursery?

Feedback about current provision was very positive, with virtually every parent (99.1%) being happy with their child's nursery.

100% of parents found it convenient to use their local nursery, although a number of children also had a split placement with another nursery (5%) or used other forms of childcare as well.

How many sessions do families use?

For some families, this was their first year of Early Learning and Childcare. For others, their child was having a second year. Last year, many parents increased their hours through the year. This year, even in their child's first year, more parents are opting for more hours from the beginning.

Are you happy with how the free hours are offered?

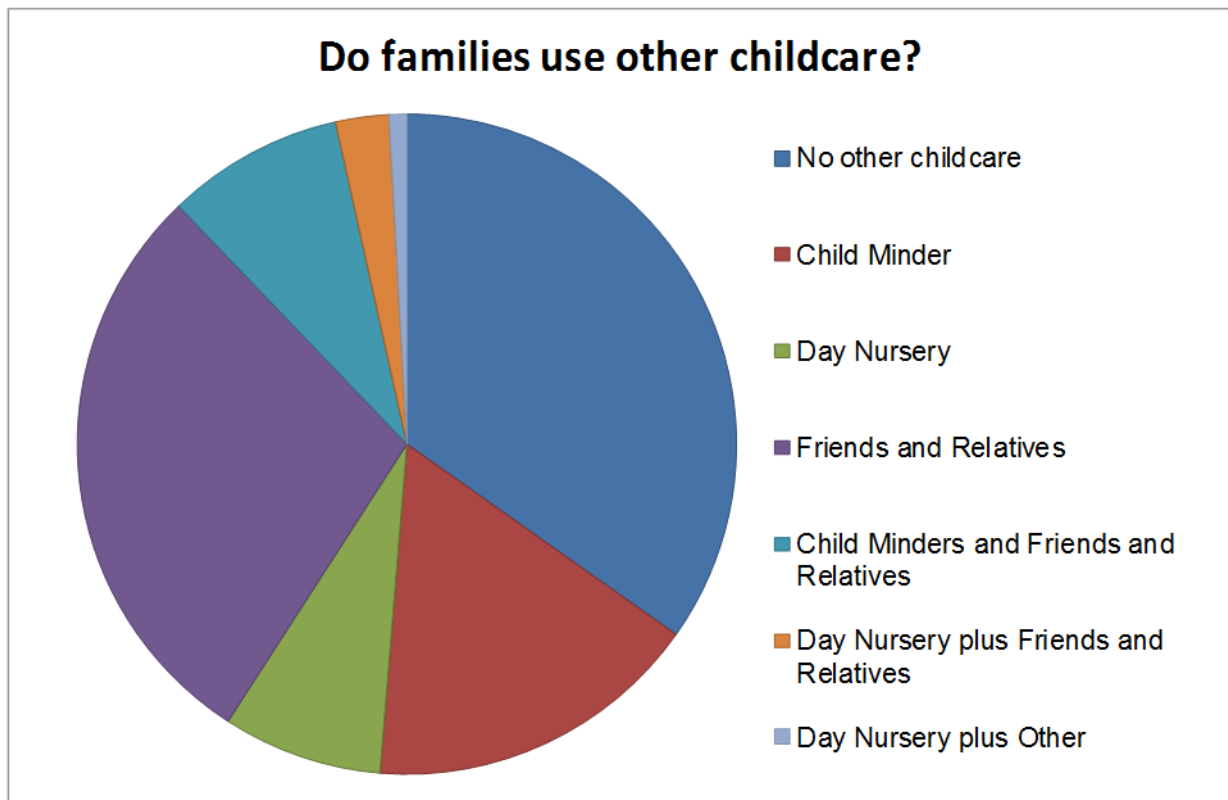
Parents were asked if how the hours in their child's nursery were offered suited them. The majority of parents, 78.4%, were very happy with how the hours were offered. Other parents suggested ways in which the provision could be even more tailored to their needs. Some parents had changed their working hours to suit the nursery hours, but were happy with what was available. Parents appreciated that nurseries tried to offer the days they had requested, and in the nurseries that offered full days, many parents mentioned that this was also useful. Quite a number of parents were using more than one full day in settings that offered this, and they felt that this fitted well with other family activities, including work.

Seven parents with children at part time settings would have liked a full day, and two parents would have liked an earlier start to the day to fit in better with work. Five parents did not answer the question, but noted that they would prefer less hours to be offered to all parents.

A significant number of parents at Papdale wanted their children to be in more of a fixed group, where the children did not change each day, rather than having the option of very flexible sessions.

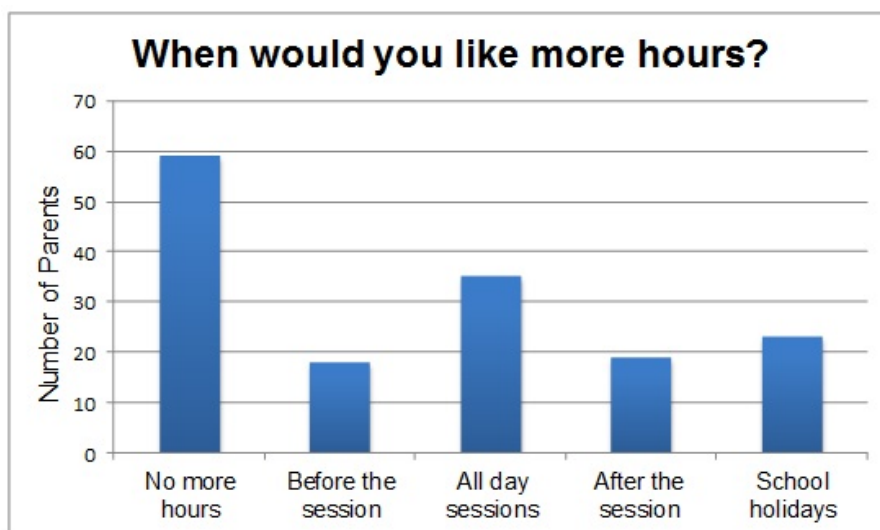
Do you use other childcare in addition to the free hours?

More than half of parents used other forms of childcare in addition to the free nursery hours. Some families used multiple forms of childcare to meet their childcare needs.



Would you be interested in more hours?

Parents were asked if they would be interested in using more than the 600 hours offered. 48% of parents would be interested in more hours. All day sessions were the most requested, however, parents also wanted 'wrap-around' (before or after the session) and school holiday provision.



Of the parents who wanted more hours, 42% would want the option to use child minders for some of these hours, and 58% would prefer to use more of the nursery provision instead.

How could we be more flexible to suit families?

Of the 81 parents who answered this question, parents were generally happy with what was offered, particularly if the setting could offer full days. Parents were also pleased that they could use a split placement between a nursery and day-care. Of the responses:

- 25% of parents were very happy with what they were currently offered.
- 27% of parents would like more full days, including an extended day from 08:00 or 09:00 to 17:00.
- 12% of parents would like the sessions to be more tailored around work hours.
- 7% of parents were not sure how the sessions could be more flexible.
- 8.6% of parents thought provision was too flexible.
- 3.7% of parents thought that education and care should be separate.

There were also suggestions from one parent each of ideas such as being able to drop off at any nursery, having up to 10 flex days each term, having school holiday sessions and using childminders.

Some parents pointed out that they would then also need flexible before and after school provision for their child when they started P1.

- “There is a gap in our area in before and after school care.”
- “My child’s nursery bends over backwards to be flexible.”
- “More full days would be good – especially to 5pm.”
- “I like it that I am able to choose the days.”
- “I think the current set up is great.”
- “I like how it is now, however, an out of school club would be handy.”

What are we going to do now?

Over the next few years, we will try to increase the range of models, and try to be increasingly flexible. These will be pilot models, while we test what works.

Setting.	Next session 2016-17.
Papdale catchment area. All settings will take children aged 3-5 years.	<p>At Papdale, parents will be able to use two and a half days, and their children will be in either group A or group B, so that they are in a more consistent group.</p> <p>Group A will run from 08:45 to 15:15 on a Monday and Tuesday and 08:45 to 11:45 on a Wednesday.</p> <p>Group B will run from 12:15 to 15:15 on a Wednesday and 08:45 to 15:15 on a Thursday and Friday.</p> <p>This may allow parents to drop children on the way to work if they wish, and also to have two full days. Of course, parents may choose to use less time.</p> <p>At the Strynd, parents will be able to choose up to six 2.5 hour sessions each week, two of which can be taken in the same day, with a lunch. Of course, parents may choose to use less time.</p> <p>At Peedie Breeks, parents can arrange to use up to 600 hours more flexibly around their childcare needs.</p>
St Andrews and Dounby.	We will try to offer parents the option to purchase additional hours where we have space.
Stromness, Glaitness and Burray.	We will continue to try to offer two or three full days where we can.
Part-time settings.	We will continue to offer part-time sessions next year.

The following year (2017-18), we will explore wrap around provision in some settings.

We will also start to include some child minders as partner providers so you can use your free hours with them too.

The next survey

We are required to survey parents every two years, so in two years' time, we will ask parents again how they feel about the hours.