

Limited or Lack of Local School Age Childcare Parent & Carer Impact Survey

Scottish Out of School Care
Network Report on limited or
low access to school age
childcare, parent and
carer survey

April 2023



SCOTTISH OUT OF SCHOOL CARE NETWORK

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SOSCN is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SCO20520

4th Floor, 41 St Vincent Place

Glasgow G1 2ER

info@soscn.org

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About SOSCN

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) has been operating since 1991, and we are the national intermediary charitable organisation supporting the school age childcare sector in Scotland. All our work is underpinned by a commitment to ensuring that children's rights are met by enabling access to play, care and informal learning opportunities outside school hours.

Our membership is free and open to services and individuals, which includes staff members, committee members, students, development and support staff, academics, regulators... anyone with an active interest in school age childcare. Join SOSCN today and you will receive regular information updates, news bulletins and access to our free and low-cost training and events.

School Age Childcare in Scotland

In Scotland, school age childcare, also commonly known as out of school care, is the largest sector providing play, care, and informal learning opportunities for school-aged children outside formal education. Services all provide child-centred care after school, and some additionally provide breakfast clubs and all-day holiday care. There are nearly 1000 registered school age childcare services in Scotland, 588 breakfast clubs and 482 holiday services. More than 50,000 children of school age are registered in childcare. (Care Inspectorate, 2021).

School age childcare services operating for more than 2 hours each day are required to register with the Care Inspectorate, and staff are regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council. Staff in registered settings are required to meet the same regulation and qualification requirements as those in early years settings.

Parents using school age childcare services registered with the Care Inspectorate may be able to access government support to pay for childcare costs through tax credits or the Tax-free childcare system.

Introduction and Background

School age childcare, often known also as out of school care, is the provision of care before school starts, after school care services and all day care during school holidays and in service days. Services are registered with the Care Inspectorate and staff are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. Staff must meet the same qualifications and levels for their roles as those working in early learning and childcare (ELC). This means, for example, that the manager of the service must obtain a degree level qualification within a stipulated time period.

The huge expansion of ELC has meant a constant “churn” of the more skilled, experienced and qualified staff in school age childcare to better pay and conditions and a full time job in ELC., or indeed a less stressful and better paid job in a supermarket. This in turn impacts on the quality of services and causes stress and loss of morale of remaining staff, as well as the many parents on management committees, trying to keep a service they all need themselves. While currently there are staffing shortages across the wider childcare and care sectors, school age childcare has always had issues with recruitment and retention of staff due to the nature of the part time hours during term time. [sac-childcare-workforce-discussion-paper.pdf \(soscn.org\)](#)

Since emerging from the pandemic and associated health measures, the numbers of school age childcare services and childcare places they offer has reduced. Because of staffing shortages some services closed completely while others, with waiting lists, cannot meet demand from parents as they have insufficient staff to meet higher numbers of places.

Just under half of services are in the voluntary sector and rely on parents to volunteer for the management committees and SOSCN has been contacted by such parents unable to recruit staff to keep their services open. We also hear from larger school age childcare services, in terms of having to cut some of their provision, or not open planned new services, simply because there are no staff.

This survey addressed the issue of whether parents and carers have access to sufficient school age childcare to meet their needs, and to investigate the impact on their families where they have insufficient or no access to school age childcare.

There are ambitious plans by the Scottish Government to expand school age childcare in Scotland with a commitment to: “Building a system of school age childcare by the end of this Parliament, providing care before and after school, all year round, supporting parents and carers – particularly on low incomes – to have secure and stable employment. Those on the lowest incomes will pay nothing.”

[Best Start - strategic early learning and school age childcare plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

This report demonstrates that for parents and carers, especially those in identified priority groups such as parents of children with additional support needs and lone parents, but across the whole socio-economic spectrum, the impact of not accessing sufficient school age childcare is preventing many from realising their full potential to work, to contribute to the economy, and to avoid being plunged into poverty.

Key Findings

- Nearly half of parents reported insufficient or no access to school age childcare, and the impact on them is profound.
- Nearly two thirds are experiencing more stress,
- More than half of them are reducing working hours.
- More than a third report reduction in household income as a result of this.
- Under half rely on friends or relatives to help.
- For those that do, more than a third of them say this causes stress for their relatives and friends and impacts negatively on their relationships.
- Lone parents are particularly impacted.
- Parents and carers of children with disabilities and additional support needs have the least access to suitable childcare.
- Within the rich qualitative commentary, the juggling, stress, impact on child and family wellbeing and halting of professional careers, alongside guilt, frustration and financial problems are all made clear.
- For those with sufficient access to school age childcare, some offered additional comments to say that without this in place, they would be “plunged into poverty”.
- Others mentioned that they use friends and family as they could not afford to pay for childcare.
- Many respondents knew about help with childcare costs via tax credits or tax free childcare but nearly a quarter of all respondents did not know about both.

Summary Results

The purpose of the survey was to discover whether parents and carers had access to sufficient school age childcare for their families, and the impact on their families where they do not access this to meet their needs.

Methodology

This online survey was distributed widely through emails and social media, via school age childcare services, parent organisations and general contacts in childcare. It was designed to be easily completed in a few minutes. The survey was conducted from 23rd February to 31st March 2023 and was hosted on freeonlinesurvey.com.

Data is based on 344 responses overall.

Contextual data

- Of those completing the survey, 91% are female, and 9% are male. 19% are lone parents or carers, and 3% have a disability.
- 54% are in full time employment, 3% are in full time education or training, and 3% are self-employed full time.
- 32% are in part-time employment, with 2% in part-time education or training, and 2% are self-employed part-time.
- 1% have more than one job and <2% are full time carers, on maternity leave or not in work or education and training.
- Where applicable, respondents' partners are: 75% in full-time employment, 1% in full-time education or training, and 12% self-employed,
- Where applicable, respondents' partners are 78% in part time work, with 3% not employed; have more than one job; is a full-time carer or has a disability.
- Responses from across up to local nineteen local authority areas showed that 48% of respondents live in cities; 35% live in towns; 12% in villages, and 5% in rural areas.
- 54% of respondents have two children; 29% have one child; 13% have three children, and 4% have four children.
- When asked if they know about financial support from the UK government towards childcare costs, 60% said 'yes' to Tax Free Childcare; 34% said 'yes' to Childcare Tax Credits, and 24% did not know about either.

Access to school age childcare

When asked do you have sufficient school age childcare to meet your family's needs, 52% said 'yes'. However, 48% did not have sufficient access locally, with 32% only having some access and requiring more hours, and 16% having no access to school age childcare locally at all.

Impact of lack of, or limited, access to School Age Childcare

- 62% experiencing more stress due to lack of school age childcare.
- 51% have had to reduce working hours, with 18% of partners having to reduce working hours.
- 41% must rely on family and friends for help with childcare, while 37% say this causes more stress on family and friends and 31% say this puts more strain on their relationships with family and friends due to their need for help with childcare.
- 35% have reduced overall household income due to lack of school age childcare and 27% have increased stress due to this lower family income.
- 19% have lost a potential job opportunity, while 17% have been unable to take up potential training or educational opportunities and 13% have had to give up their job or career.
- For others some had to give up training and education,5%, or their partner did, 5%.
- Some are under pressure to increase working hours as they are on universal credit, 4%.
- 8% of respondents also commented under “other” impacts of lack of access to school age childcare and this included the comments in the following section.

Comments from Parents and Carers

Nearly one hundred additional comments were provided, often in great detail, they are analysed in the main report under categories of Additional Support Needs, Child Development and Family Wellbeing, Economic Considerations, Lone Parents, and Work and Career Impact.

There are a range of written answers under “other reasons”, while a number of respondents offered additional comments, which bring to life the pressures they are facing due to lack or limited access to school age childcare.

This includes stress about doing their jobs properly, using up leave to cover holidays, working when the children are asleep, worried about children’s development in no longer having social interaction with other children and them sitting in front of tv or Xbox, while the parent tries to get work done.

Parents and carers of children with disabilities report even more difficulties in accessing suitable care for their children, while transport issues also influence the rush to get children to and from school whilst still trying to hold down a job.

Respondents including many essential public service staff, such as NHS consultants and staff juggling limited access to after school care, or using lower quality “babysitters” in between, or a teacher who cannot work full time because of no access to a breakfast club in her school. As one parent said, “our economy is in decline, and it should be a primary priority of government that sufficient school age childcare is available and accessible to those contributing to the economy”.

Lone parents, in particular struggle with juggling work and childcare:

“I’ve been on the after-school club waiting list since May 2021. I have to squeeze my working hours in during the school day, I have a couple of left over hours I have to add on in the evenings. When I’m required to be into the office this eats into my work time which increases the add on time I have to work in the evenings. It is extremely frustrating and stressful and as a lone parent I have no time for myself. I am exhausted, underpaid and under supported.”

“It’s so hard for me single mom with two young children 8 and 5yrs old get pressure job from universal credit. Now I am studying at college which helps little bit with costs after school club when I am studying.”

“Unfortunately, we don’t have any family or friends to assist us with childcare, we have to unfortunately take it all upon ourselves during school holidays and industrial action days and not able to work and earn income.”

“I have had to work from home rather than be in office to ensure I am available to collect my children from school. This also interrupts my working pattern/meetings as I have to keep free time around school pick up.”

“Strain on our relationship due to having to juggle work and childcare.”

“Our children have to be at home after school 2 days per week unsupervised while we work which is detrimental to them and stressful for us and has caused issues with my partners employer whose contract of employment explicitly states employees can't be responsible for childcare during working hours.”

“This is exasperating my disability and rendering me unable to care for my family at all on some days.”

“In addition to missing out on important opportunities and engagement commitments at work, I am unable to attend to my own physical and mental wellbeing as I have no family or close friends here so have no help with childcare at all.”

“Have no family support, just my husband and I. Work from home.”

“My child sits in front of the TV or Xbox while I work”.

“We've had to endure higher financial stress to pay childcare so my partner could have time to focus on job applications and returning to work. It has also made us reconsider our financial ability to further grow the family.”

“Having to work hours during evening and or weekend to make up for lack of childcare during working hours Hugely disruptive to the working day. It has meant I cannot return to the office more than 2 days per week. We have just recently gotten access to sufficient childcare prior to that we experienced the above.”

“Children spend more time alone/entertaining themselves e.g., toys, on devices.”

“Having to work evenings and weekends to catch up on hours lost to school pick up and having a child at home till the end of the working day.”

“My child is disadvantaged by not having an after school childcare setting after hers closed. She used to enjoy interacting with different age groups. She has to occupy herself for 1.5hrs each week as I cannot reduce my hours any further and my husband needs to maintain his in order to keep as much income as possible.”

“Not performing well at work as having to leave meetings/tasks early to get kids from school. Working late at night to make up time. Having to use annual leave/unpaid leave when schools are off and holiday club is closed.”

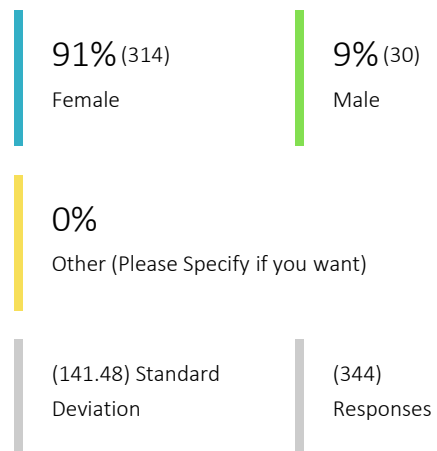
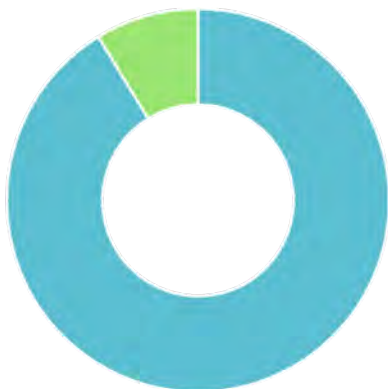
“In addition to missing out on important opportunities and engagement commitments at work, I am unable to attend to my own physical and mental wellbeing as I have no family or close friends here so have no help with childcare at all.”

Although those who said they currently had enough school age childcare, were not asked to complete the remaining questions, some did provide further comments which are also enlightening.

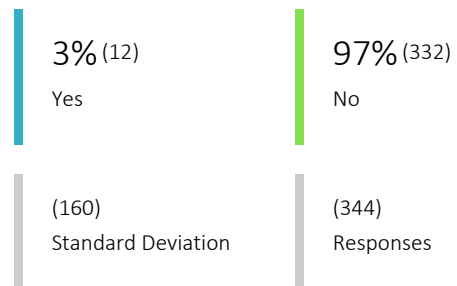
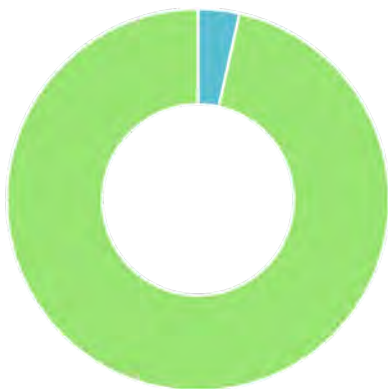
Without school age childcare *“Children and I would be pushed into poverty.”* As overall results show many parents and carers are losing family income, employment and educational opportunities which helps keep families out of poverty.

“If our OOSC and holiday club couldn't run I would have to significantly cut my working hours or even leave my job as an NHS Consultant.” Again, we cannot afford to lose essential staff from the NHS. Please do look at the many comments from parents and carers in the body of the report, as their stories of lack of access to suitable school age childcare are quite compelling.

1 Your Gender



2 Do you have a disability?



3 If you answered yes to having a disability, you have the option of providing more details here if you wish:

Arthritis

Visually impaired and unable to drive

Epilepsy

Neuropathic pain condition and . bromyalgia

N/a

ADHD/ASD

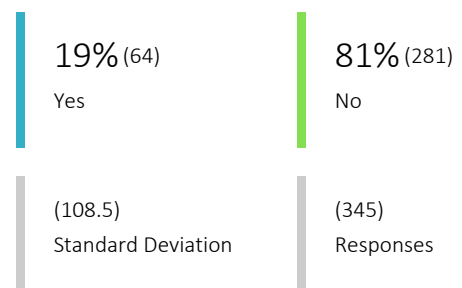
ADHD

I have been advised my depression comes under the Disability Act because of the length of time I've had it/likelihood of it recurring N/A

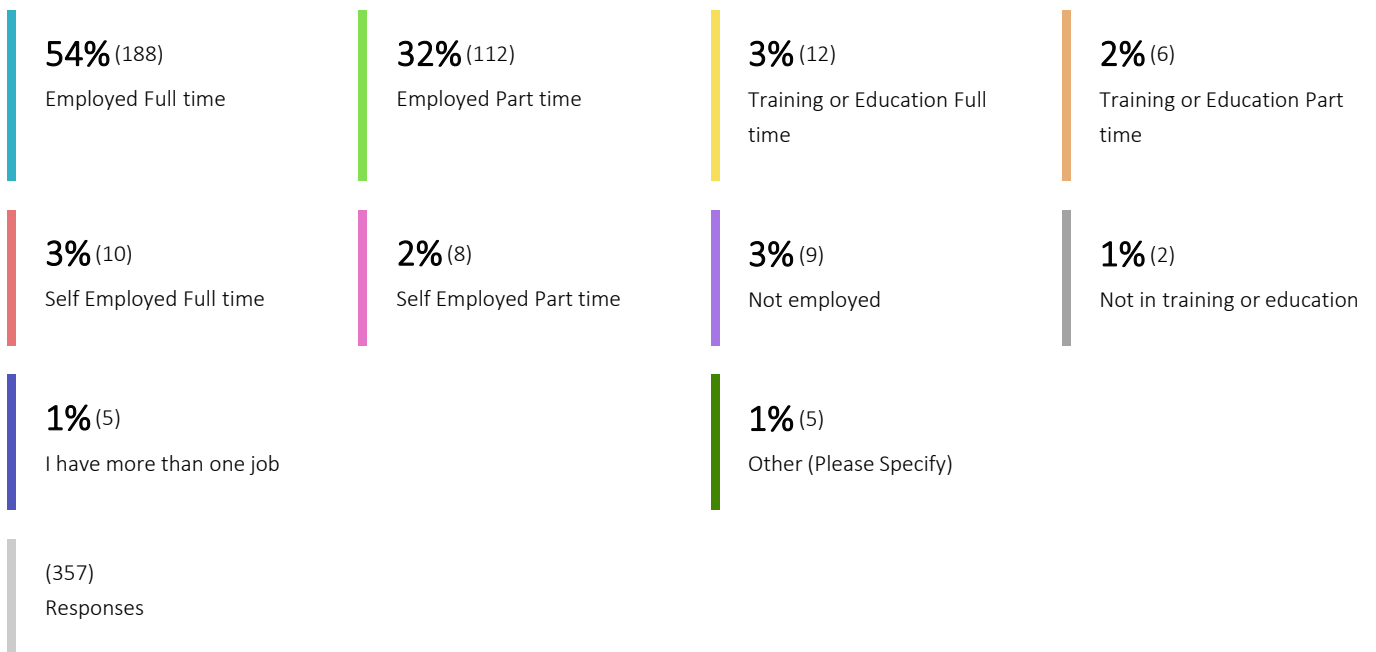
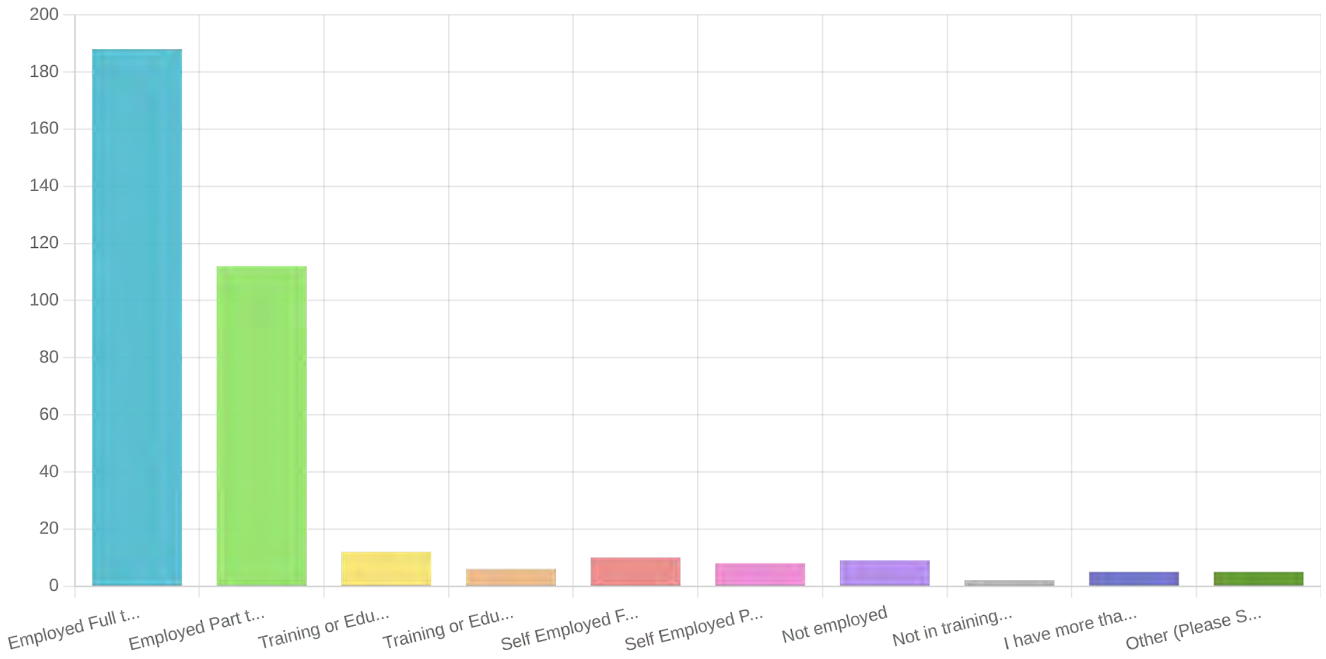
N/A

Mental health

4 Are you a lone parent or carer ?



5 What is your current employment, education or training status?



I have a zero hours contract (supply primary teacher). Work is available to me but I am restricted by childcare. Full time

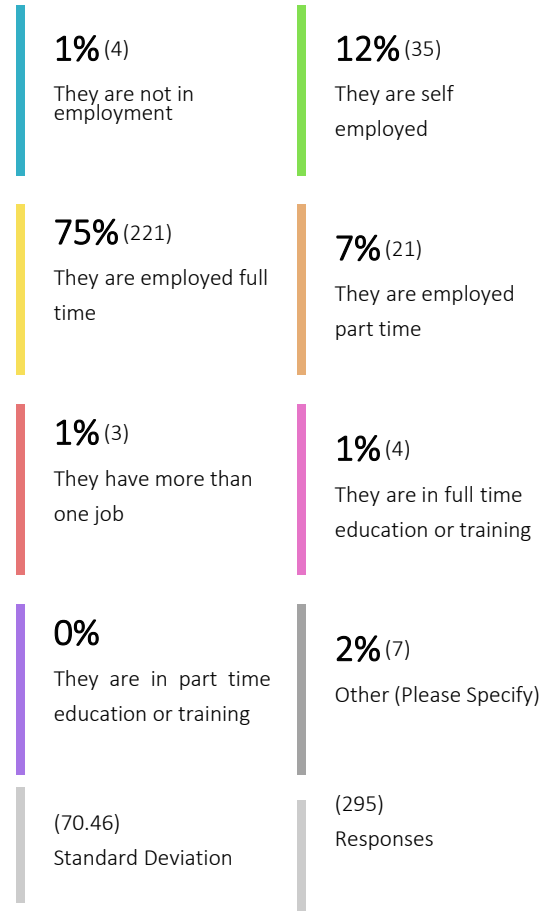
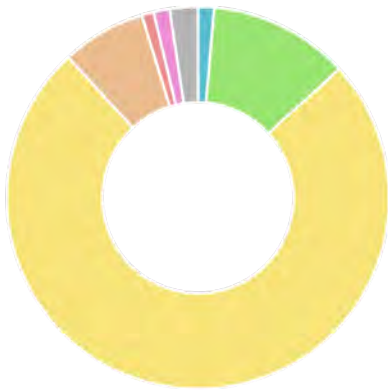
teacher currently on maternity leave

Carer

Full time carer

Maternity leave

6 (If applicable) what is your partner's current employment or education and training status?(This includes an option if not currently working.)



Full time employed

N/A

Employed and In training. Working 4 days at college 1 day in person plus online learning. No

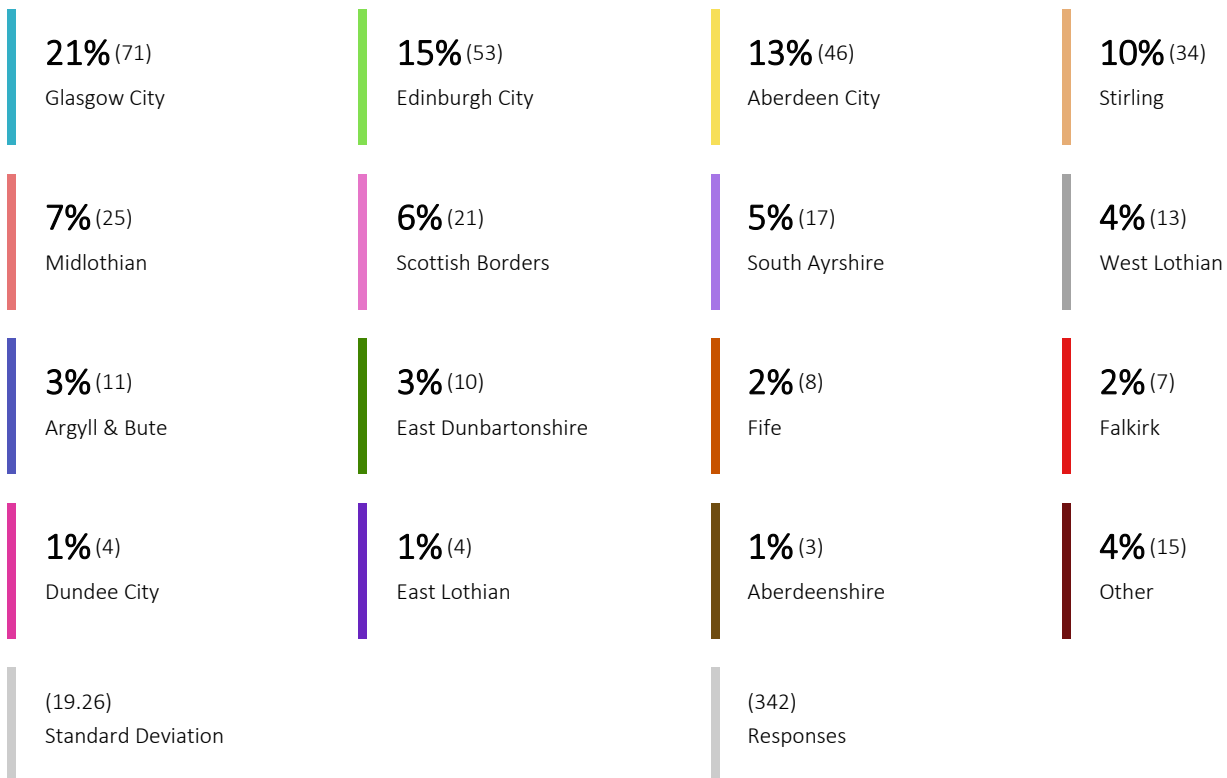
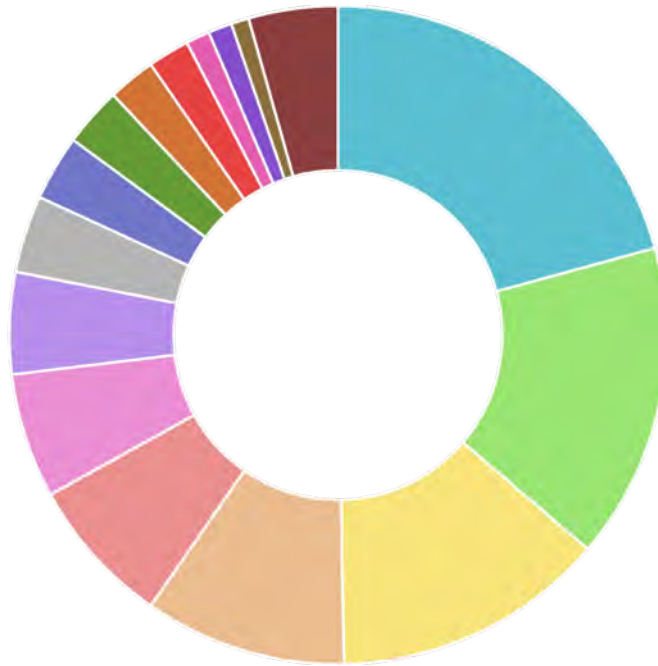
partner

Full time carer

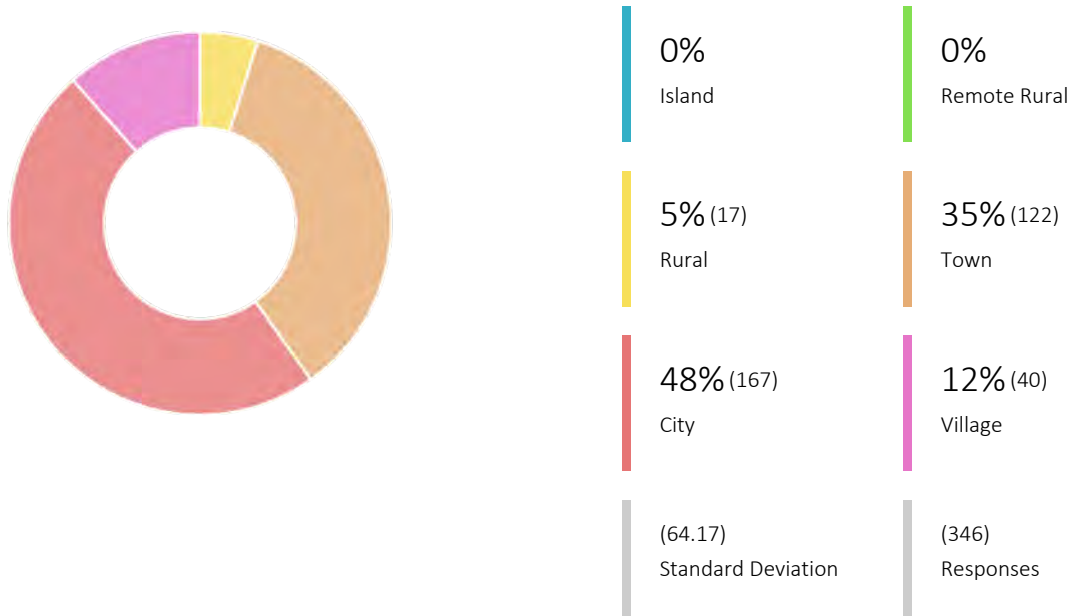
Deceased

On disability benefits

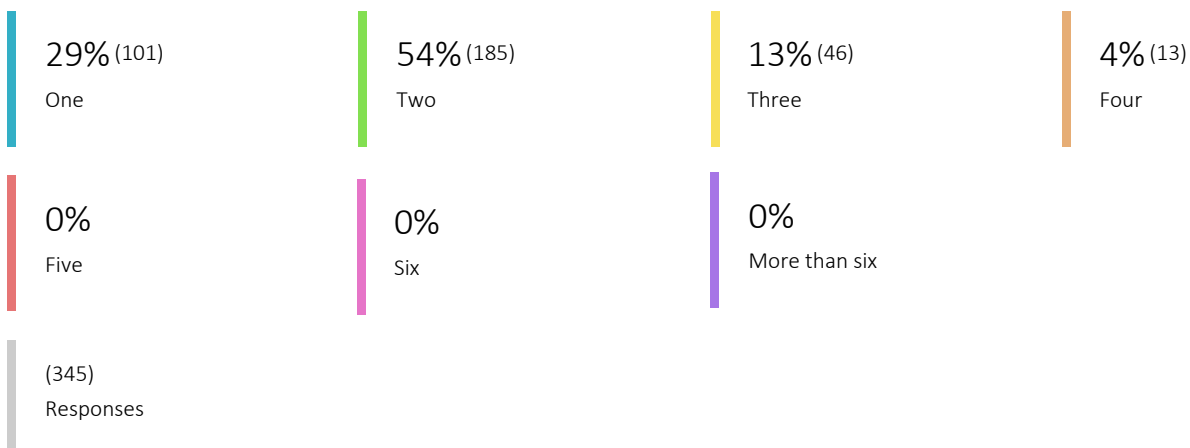
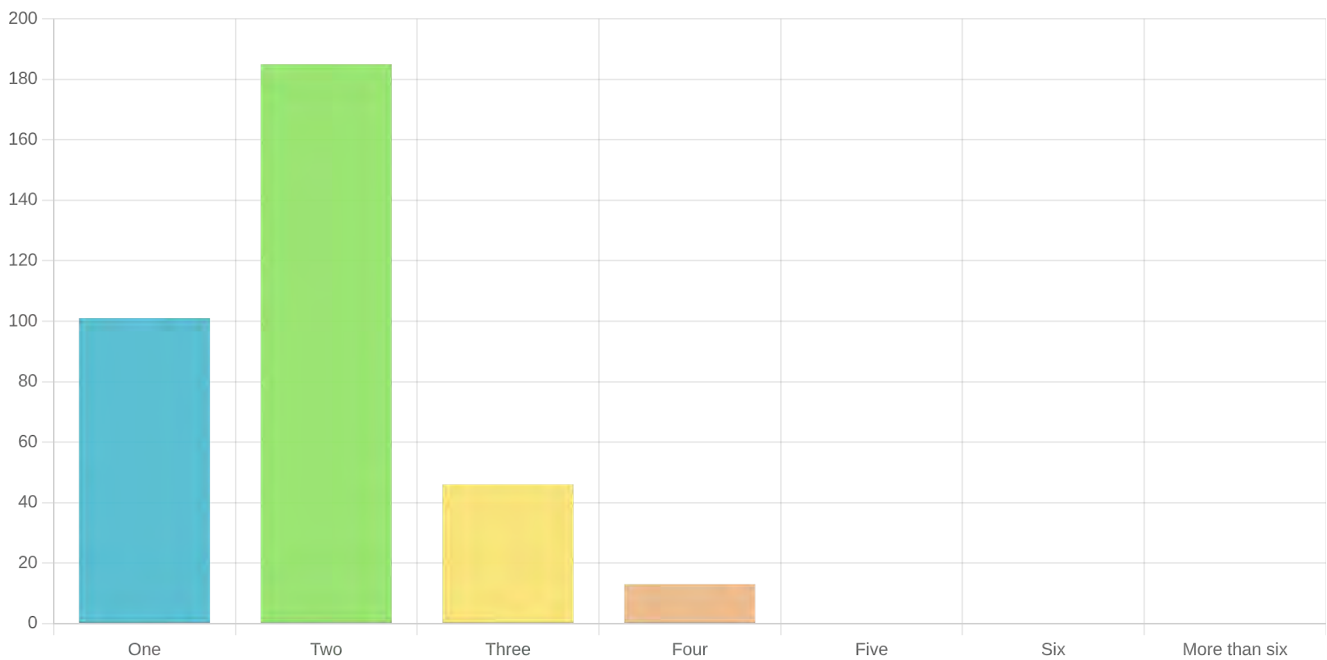
7 In which local authority do you live?



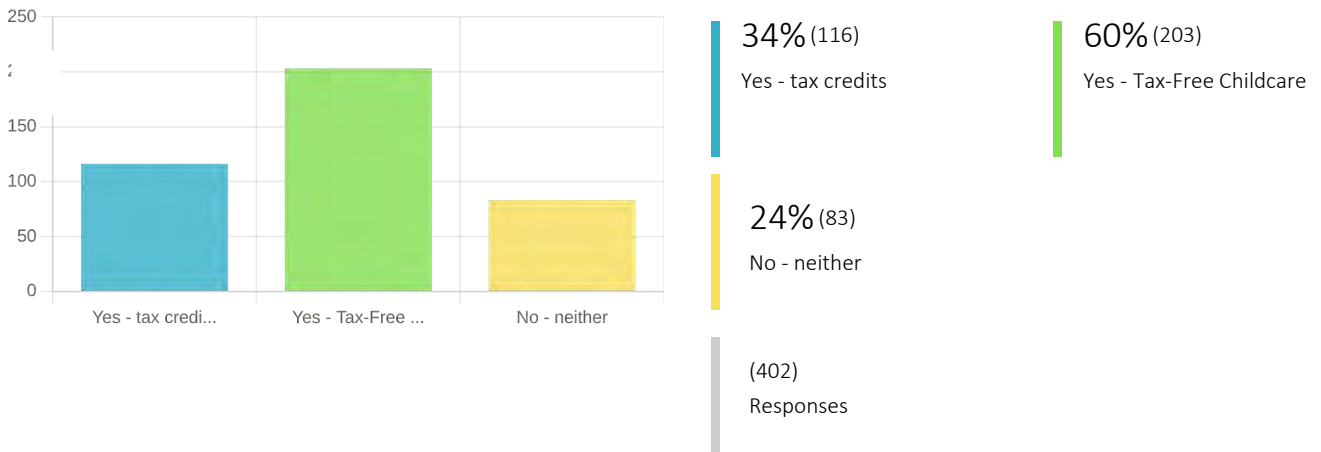
8 What type of area do you live in?



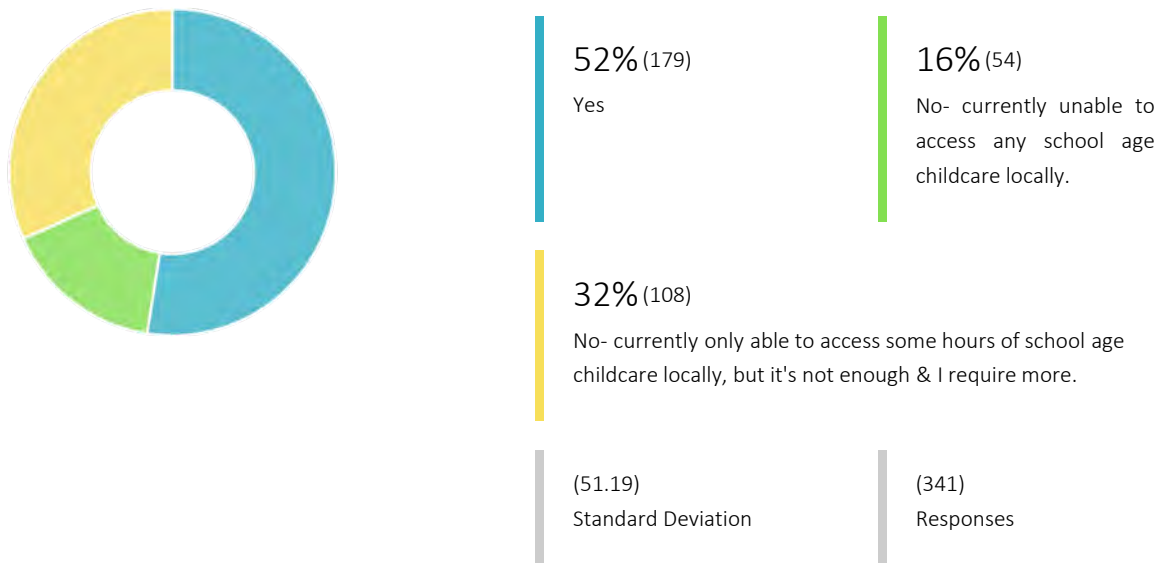
9 How many children do you have?



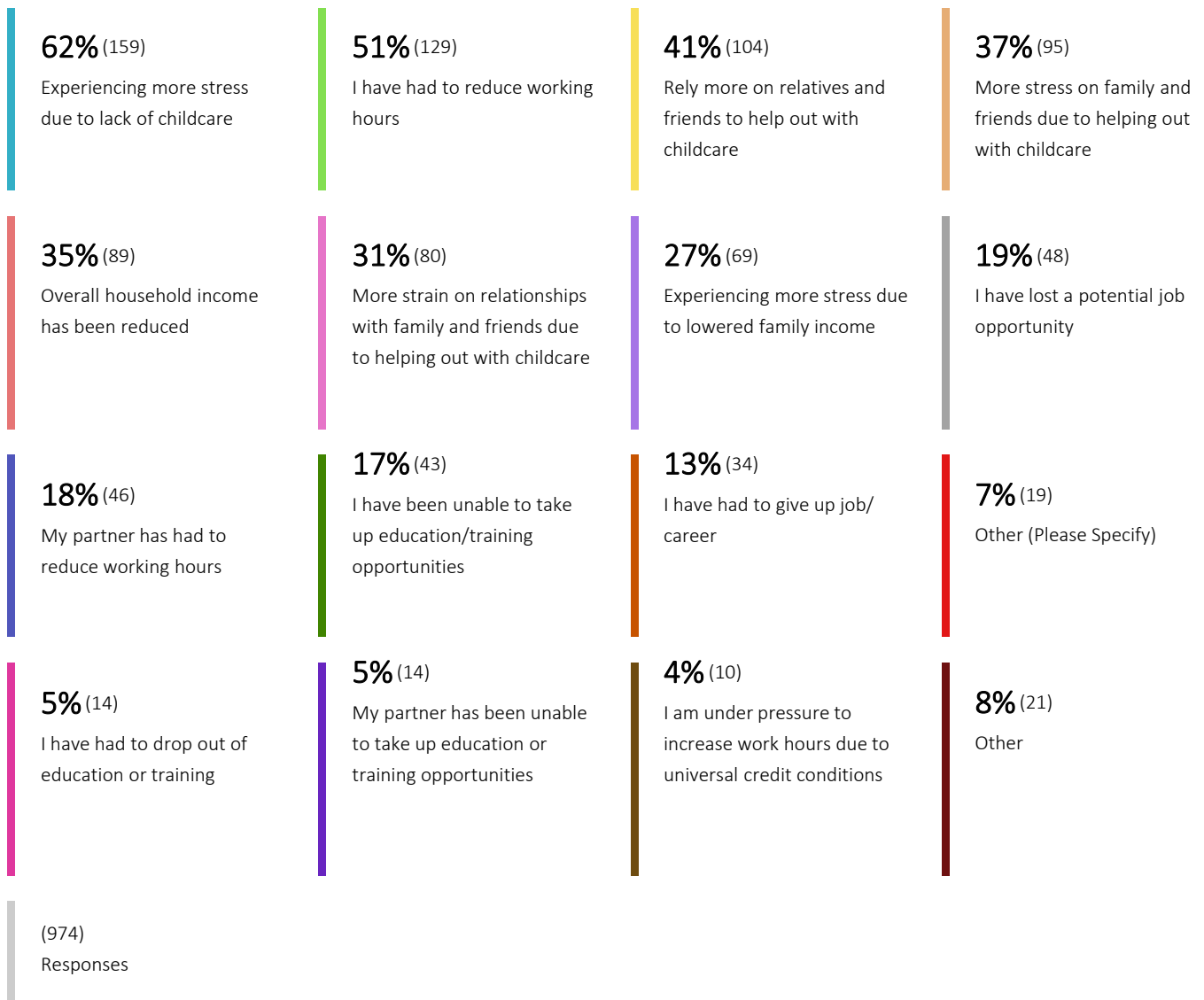
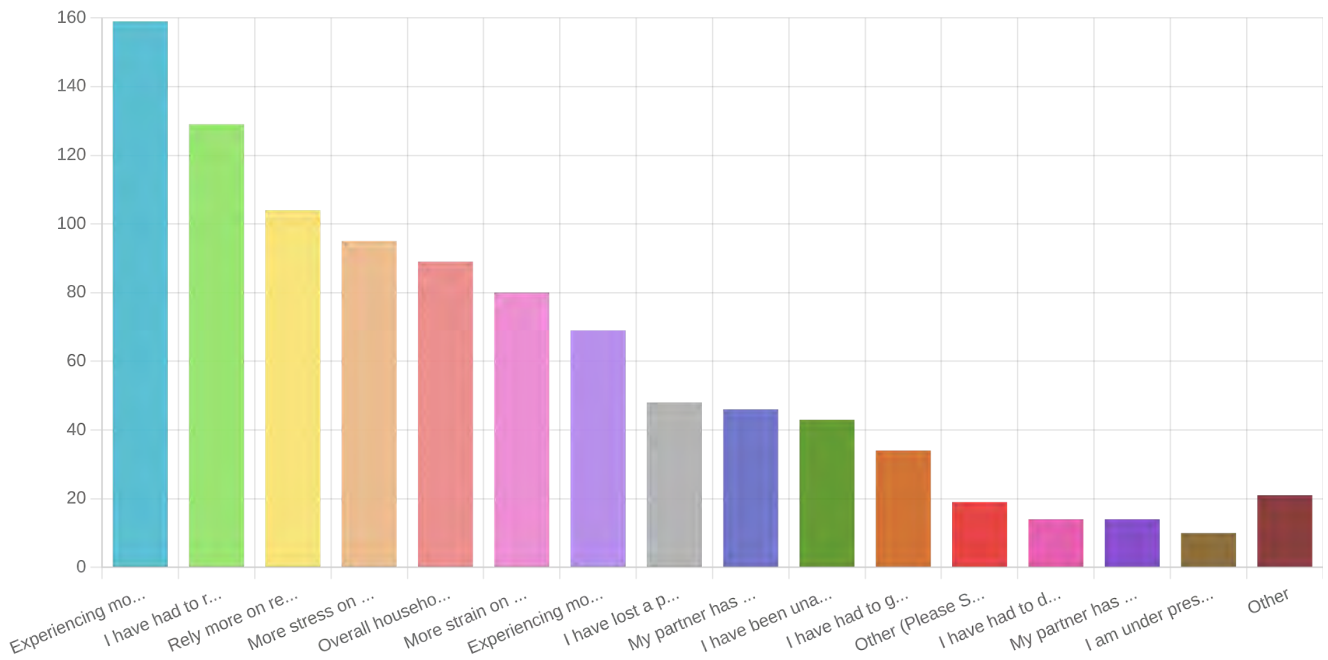
10 Do you know about financial support from UK government to help parents and carers pay for childcare?



11 Do you currently access sufficient school age childcare to meet your family's needs? (If you answer 'Yes' to this question, there are no further questions for you to answer- please just submit after answering.)



12 What is the impact on you and your family if you are not able to access sufficient school age childcare locally?



“Unfortunately, we don’t have any family or friends to assist us with childcare, we have to unfortunately take it all upon ourselves during school holidays and industrial action days and are not able to work and earn an income.”

“I have had to do homework rather than be in the office to ensure I am available to collect my children from school. This also interrupts my working pattern/meetings as I have to keep free time around school pick up.”

“Strain on our relationship due to having to juggle work and childcare.”

“Our children have to be at home after school 2 days per week unsupervised while we work which is detrimental to them and stressful for us and has caused issues with my partners employer whose contract of employment explicitly states employees can't be responsible for childcare during working hours.”

“This is exasperating my disability and rendering me unable to care for my family at all on some days.”

“In addition to missing out on important opportunities and engagement commitments at work, I am unable to attend to my own physical and mental wellbeing as I have no family or close friends here so have no help with childcare at all.”

“Have no family support, just my husband and I. Work from home.”

“My child sits in front of the TV or Xbox while I work.”

“These would be applicable if we did not have childcare available to us.”

“We've had to endure higher financial stress to pay childcare so my partner could have time to focus on job applications and returning to work. It has also made us reconsider our financial ability to further grow the family.”

“Having to work hours during evening and or weekend to make up for lack of childcare during working hours Hugely disruptive to the working day. It has meant I cannot return to the office more than 2 days per week. We have just recently gotten access to sufficient childcare prior to that we experienced the above.”

“Children spend more time alone/entertaining themselves e.g., toys, on devices.”

“Having to work evenings and weekends to catch up on hours lost to school pick up and having a child at home till the end of the working day.”

“My child is disadvantaged by not having an after school childcare setting after hers closed. She used to enjoy interacting with different age groups. She has to occupy herself for 1.5hrs each week as I cannot reduce my hours any further and my husband needs to maintain his in order to keep as much income as possible.”

“Not performing well at work as having to leave meetings/tasks early to get kids from school. Working late at night to make up time. Having to use annual leave/unpaid leave when schools are off and holiday club is closed”.

13. Please add any additional comments about the impact of not being able to access school age childcare has on you or your family

With nearly one hundred people providing additional comments, we have listed them below in five categories, Additional Support Needs, Child Development and family wellbeing, Economic considerations, Lone Parents, and Work and Career impact.

Additional Support Needs

“There is no childcare for children with significant additional support needs. This has huge impacts on us as a family. I have reduced my work hours to 0.5 but am at risk of having to fully give up work as there is no suitable childcare available both in the holidays and after school. Feel very stigmatised.”

“My son is disabled. There are no breakfast clubs or after school care for disabled children.”

“There is no after school activities for ASN children locally.”

“We have one child with an intellectual disability who is in a mainstream setting at school. Her needs are not complex, and she has no medical conditions, but she does require a bit of extra care at after school and holiday programs. There seems to be nothing for her here (we are new to Edinburgh), and we have no family or friends locally yet. It means that in the summer holiday we will have to hire a nanny at great expense (having a child with a disability already has extra expenses associated with it) and the nanny will not be able to manage the two children safely on her own for a while. This means that both children will be stuck inside the unit a bit. “

“I’m still searching for something for her. The local after school care provided won’t return my calls or emails. After chatting with people, I have found out that they are notoriously bad for this. Many families cannot access their service for those who need it. It’s such a shame really.”

“My child has a complex disability. The maximum holiday support available to us is 4 x 4 days a year (9 until 3pm). Her school is only special school with an after school club and there's a huge waiting list. There is a severe lack of private childcare. The inequality with mainstream provision is discriminatory to say the least.”

“My son has additional support needs. By accessing after school club, he is able to play with his friends in the local community.”

“There is a serious lack of before and after childcare for children with disabilities. I have 2 autistic children and there is nowhere suitable for them to attend. This is a huge issue that needs to be addressed.”

“If my son couldn't get a place at my out of school care I would have to give my job up due to my son having autism, it's very difficult to find childcare or to get family & friends to watch my son as he is very challenging.”

“We are lucky to be able to work flexibly, but neither of us is performing at work the way we should and are struggling to make up the time. We have a childminder for our eldest age 7 but our 5-year-old has no after school care. He has additional support needs which makes finding appropriate support impossible. I’ve asked parents of other children with ASN how they manage, and all of the mothers have given up work or have drastically cut their hours. It’s a complete disaster!”

“Our children are missing out on stimulating activities after school as they have to play alone and quietly while we work until at least 5pm. We feel very guilty about this, particularly as one child has ASN. We previously had 3 days out of school care per week but due to rising costs and recruitment problems it had to close. The only other after-school care we could access was oversubscribed, and we have only managed to secure one day of care and are on a log waiting list for extra days.”

“We were using an after-school club which was perfect for our family as it was in the school building. My eldest is autistic and it can be difficult to find suitable childcare for her. The afterschool club closed as it was no longer financially viable and no alternative was established, there are no child minders in the area with capacity and I have had to reduce my working hours significantly (full time to 2 days) and still struggle with the juggle of picking up the kids at school. I contacted the local SNP counsellor, and she raised it, but no action was taken to help the families affected.”

“My child has Autism and is really struggling with the childcare we have just now, there needs to be more options! They build new houses every day but don’t build any more childcare facilities.”

“Not only is there a lack of locally available childcare, but there is also a complete lack of any service to meet the needs of children with additional needs.”

“We have secured a place at ASN OOSC, for which we are grateful - this is during the holidays. The odd day here or there and for the increasing number of strike days, we have to take time off work. I can work from home however this is not a real possibility due to my son’s learning disabilities. I have reduced my hours to cover after school.”

“Can find any childcare for additional support needs during Easter break.”

“The only way I can get work done is to change my working hours so that I can work while the child sleeps as much as possible. This means very early rises (5am or earlier) and weekend work. Over long periods of time, this is unsustainable due to wellbeing deteriorating and poor health. Because our son has special needs, this has further complications for the sort of childcare that would be suitable for him. After-school clubs often don't work for him because of the sensorial difficulties he has. Whilst we have access to funds to help with his care, these are extremely limited and inadequate to cover the real cost of looking after him outside of school hours.”

“My eldest son is disabled and attends a special school. The council are scrapping after school care and holiday clubs are so limited, I cannot work and it’s crippling my family.”

"I am having to spend time working from home and juggling the needs of my children with work demands is challenging. I have a child with additional needs and childcare is even more limited for him."

"We currently use after school care but once our daughter reaches age 11 she can no longer go, due to her having learning disabilities this will cause us issues as it will mean one of us cutting our hours to be able to collect her from school daily, it would be great to see some kind of after school club for older children with working parents who cannot be at home on their own. "

"It's not only childcare but childcare that is inclusive that can cope with ADHD/ASD where the child and adults feel comfortable together."

"One of my children's education is over two environments and this means we can't access childcare for after school."

Child Development and Family Wellbeing

"I can only get one day of Afterschool care at another school. There is no formal transport arrangement to get the kids there so sometimes I have to rely on taxis - which is not really suitable for young children and causes me guilt/stress. The arrangement runs week to week making it difficult to plan ahead. My work has been very understanding but I have missed key meetings. My partner works onsite and cannot leave to help with childcare and we have no family close by. I want to work but feel totally unsupported."

"Potential safeguarding issues due to necessity to rely on friends and neighbours for support."

"My school-age child attends a school which is a 40-minute bus journey from our home (Gaelic Medium) or a 20–30-minute car journey. It simply isn't practical or cost/time efficient to use the school after school/holiday club due to distance from home/work. Bus transport means my child is effectively getting up to 90-120 minutes of "out of school care" sitting on a bus with no adult other than a bus driver, which is how we manage. (Leaves 08.50, home 15.45)."

"I also feel that my child is missing out on beneficial development opportunities that my older children benefitted from when we did have access to a local after school club. By this I mean the opportunity to make friends and have social interaction with other children and adults."

"Notice an impact on my child's behaviour as we rely more on tv or tablet more while trying to meet work needs. Also, less opportunities to socialise with friends."

"We do access council run after school club and a private holiday club in summer. We previously used the council holiday Club in April and October at our own school, but this is now mostly in other schools. Whilst not as convenient our main concern is it is not familiar to the kids, so we don't like to use a random place for just a few days childcare."

“Impacts on my child negatively”

“There is no supervised breakfast club for the school, the only after school club is very poorly run with the needs of the children not being met and children being put at risk of injury or harm. Working parents have little to no options for childcare and what is available is of a very poor standard. No holiday clubs that cover a working day either.”

“We did have sufficient access to childcare however it closed last year as wasn't able to recruit a new manager due to the stringent restrictions on the qualifications and the hours expected from the manager. This put huge pressure on us as a family as there were limited options elsewhere and we were struggling to manage work and childcare and felt it was impacting our relationship with our son. There always seems to be support available for people who don't work - thankful to our friends who have been able to help out and create a better structure.”

“We rely on grandparents for all childcare as I work shifts & my husband starts work too early to access childcare before nursery.”

“The clubs that the school offer are only for one hour, and not something my children like to do. I don't understand why the school cannot be utilized better.”

“I am really glad to have an opportunity to share my feelings about the impact of wraparound childcare stress on me and my family. My eldest child is in primary one and this year I am on maternity leave so have been able to drop him off and pick him up each day. However, in August I am returning to work and have been told this must be on a full-time basis. There is no flexibility in my workplace, and I do not want to give up my job as it is one, I am really happy in and one I know where I am making a difference to colleagues and pupils. We also cannot afford for me to give up my job if we are to remain in the same home and school catchment. As my husband and I are both teachers, when I am back at work we will start to require drop off and pick up wraparound for our son every day both before and after school. We need to leave for work at 8am at the latest and the school day starts at 9am. The school day finishes at 3.15pm and the earliest we can be home is 4.15pm. There are no days we can start later or finish earlier as our school does not allow this. It is honestly no exaggeration to say that this has been causing me huge stress and sleepless nights for the last two and a half years, when we were moving house and beginning to think about living in catchments where there were schools with on site wraparound care. We are fortunate to have bought a house very close to a school where there is a breakfast club and after-school provision. But there are only 40 places for the whole school, and it is really hard to get your child in. Our son has been on the breakfast club and after school club waiting list for almost two years (as we deferred him this year due to my Mat leave) but there is no guarantee that he will have a place from August in any of the ten sessions, as they all have a waiting list. We have to wait until May/June for confirmation and just have to cross our fingers there is capacity. We have managed to find a local childminder who may be able to help before school, and a local teenager who could pick up a couple of times a week, but there is still a great deal of uncertainty and as a result of stress around me returning to work and how logistics will actually work. My son has been picking up on this anxiety too despite our best efforts. I also have a three-year-old who will be starting school in August 2024, and I have already begun to feel anxious about how we will manage wraparound for her. Let alone for our baby when the time comes for her to start school... when we found out we were expecting for the third time I genuinely just kept worrying about childcare more than enjoying the pregnancy, which felt really sad. Overall, I find the issue of wraparound care to be hugely stressful and have seriously considered giving up a job and career I

love to become a childminder simply so I can child mind my own kids and get a bit of income helping other parents at their wits end."

"Limited choice of provision & so reluctance from children to attend provision that is available. Hardly any provision for children who are 11 or older."

"We were going to move house as we would like to move to a house with a garden for my child but options are increasingly limited as some primary schools have no after school care or breakfast club options so this is a deal breaker and I would not change school unless I was confident in their childcare provisions as I have at least some of what I need now. Our childminder is emigrating to Canada and this means I cannot increase my working hours as planned - which was partly due to demand due to our inability to recruit additional staff at work, or existing staff cannot increase hours for the same reason, and also I wanted to earn more money to move to a bigger house."

"We have no family nearby to rely on. Childcare is essential, not only for working parents but for children's development."

"No breakfast club at the school means that we need to rely on grandparents to drop my 3 children off at school at 8.45am so I can get to work on time. However, they are in their 70's and their health is deteriorating so may mean I need to give up my job if I can't find someone to do this. Can't think of any other options."

Economic Considerations

"Had childcare before I returned so I paid for childcare for 6 months before I got a job!"

"I pay for private OSC and holiday club. It's been a god send. Why doesn't the government fund these places?"

"When one of the carers is looking to return to work, it is a situation in which one needs time to focus on development and job search. Also, the lack of immediate availability of childcare, means that if you are out of job for a long period, you feel force (if financially possible) to arrange childcare (or retain it) to ensure you will be able to rejoin the workforce at a short notice The current financial help e.g.: Tax-free childcare does not cover this situation, which makes it worse (you pay more for childcare when one of the carers is out of work for a long period). This ends up in either sacrificing the career or putting more financial stress to pay for childcare (mainly pulling from family savings). The problem is made worse by the fact that family income is not accounted jointly from a Tax perspective."

"It's so difficult being a full-time working parent. The amount of good quality childcare is absolutely shocking. If my child minder left tomorrow, I would have to significantly reduce my working hours to match school pick up times and God only knows how we would manage for money. How have we let it get to this? Where the cost of living is such that I have to work full time but where the childcare provision for school age kids is so low?!"

“After school care is far too expensive.”

“The cost of childcare is absolutely unaffordable and means I try to use as little as possible.”

“We have the childcare available but due to being on universal credit and having to pay it out as a whole sum to then have to wait until the following uc payment to receive 85% back means I have to be careful how many hours I can afford to pay back each time, so this is quite restricting and also means I still have to rely on family to help out.”

“We are restricted in accessing it not because of childcare availability but through family finances. I’d actually like to have my child in more, but I simply can’t afford it. So, while the childcare I have is ‘sufficient,’ it’s not optimal.”

“Our economy is in decline, and it should be a primary priority of government that sufficient school age childcare is available and accessible to those contributing to the economy.”

“For me, the impact is more financial. I rely on my mother and friends for the afternoons I have no childcare. The Out of School have offered me one other afternoon a week but I cannot afford it.”

“General comment - I am considering stopping using childcare because I am earning in the range where the government is clawing back child benefit. As a result, I have worked out that for the hours my children are in childcare, I am earning less than £2.50 per hour (once tax/NI/loss of child benefit and childcare are taken off). I would rather spend that time with my kids than at work, so am considering dropping my hours accordingly. This will reduce the number of children paying for childcare and put a greater burden on those that still need to access it.”

Lone Parents

“Children and I would be pushed into poverty (without school age childcare).”

“Lack of childcare is my biggest obstacle in getting back to work and training for better job opportunities. Left alone financial impact has on me as a single mum it also has a tremendous impact on my mental health leaving me feeling helpless.”

“I’ve been on the after-school club waiting list since May 2021. I have to squeeze my working hours in during the school day, I have a couple of left over hours I have to add on in the evenings. When I’m required to be in the office this eats into my work time which increases the add-on time I have to work in the evenings. It is extremely frustrating and stressful and as a lone parent I have no time for myself. I am exhausted, underpaid and under supported.”

"It's so hard for me as a single mom with two young children 8 and 5yrs old to get pressure job from universal credit. Now I am studying at college they give a little of help with costs of after school club when I am studying."

"As a single working parent, having after school care abruptly taken away from school has cause me a lot of stress. I really struggle to manage my working hours and juggle childcare. Family help when they can but that is very very limited."

"Childcare is so expensive now, even more so after lockdown, it is becoming impossible. Luckily to a certain extent my employer is flexible, but this adds extra strain with other employees as they feel I am getting preferential treatment. I understand that prices need to go up as childcare has its own increasing expenses but it's not viable for a lot of people. I only have one income which is definitely stretched."

"Out of School care is extremely expensive for lone parent."

Work and Career Impact

"My return to work after career break is severely restricted due to no after school club provision (this was closed last October due to lack of staff). We have no family around to help. We could do with me working some days, and there is work available to me, but I cannot access it without after school childcare provision."

"It makes life very difficult in the mornings. Pre pandemic we had access to a paid breakfast club now it's a school run one. Which doesn't start to half 8. We live in a commuter town. I've had to change job to the town we live in (and career opportunities) my husband reduces hours & going in later. We have no family in the town to help with mornings. Work starts at 9 for most office workers and 30 mins is not enough commuting time."

"My wife and I are both full-time teachers with fixed working hours. We need an hour of childcare before and after school for our three children. Before and after school clubs are full and there are limited childminders in our area. Every year we have to scramble pulling in favours from friends, family and neighbours. We have contemplated one of us going part time, but we would then not be able to cover childcare costs for our three children while we are working. The uncertainty year on year is stressful for us and different solutions unsettling for the children."

"Waiting lists are long and the cost are high. This limits work and study opportunities for parents of school aged children. The quality of provision is also not always very good - more activity based, and enriching after-school care is really needed. At times, the lack of childcare provision has really impacted on my mental health and has also reduced my opportunities for promotion at work."

"Stress at work."

“Our employers have been accommodating in terms of allowing us to WFH, however we are expected to return to the office part time, which isn’t going to be possible which may lead to us having to quit work.”

“It took 2 years to get childcare at the school. Now sorted. Holiday clubs can be pretty variable. Lots of school holidays to cover I work 30 hours and have used and continue to use a childminder in order for me to get back to work, some months this has equated to most of my pay being taken up with childcare costs but for long term prospects I have to continue to work, so although short term it’s far from ideal, in the long term my children will have good role models, working and maintaining our career whilst hopefully reducing our childcare costs in the coming years.”

“Locally there is not much on offer with regard to after-school care or holiday clubs. I am fortunate to have a childminder for after school care but if she gave up, there are only 2 after school settings that are available, and both are currently full. There is also a lack of holiday clubs (affordable) and struggle for childcare over school holidays when neither myself or partner can take time off work.”

“My children are on a waiting list for afterschool club since August last year and I was told that afterschool clubs cannot guarantee a place from next academic year.”

“I cannot work.”

“I am serving in the military and am a reactive detective. If I do not have childcare, I am unable to react to serious and complex crime should the need arise. I am also held at readiness for the army and without childcare this renders me operationally ineffective.”

“It’s been a huge barrier in my career over the last 10 years.”

“We rely on grandparents for all childcare as I work shifts & my husband starts work too early to access childcare before nursery.”

“We have a great after-school facility but there are limited places available after 3.45 which has meant I’ve had to change my working hours.”

“We understand that wrap around care is not a statutory service but it’s ridiculous that the council are making no effort to facilitate additional childcare. My town currently has a wrap round care capacity of 34 children. My son’s primary school has an enrolment of 370 pupils and is only 1 of 5 primary schools in the town. We are lucky that I work from home in a flexible company so can handle morning drop off and evening pickup as my wife is out of the home longer than the wrap round care covers. There are going to be a lot of people in my town who are struggling a lot more than we are. I don’t know how we are going to cope during the summer holidays as I do not have sufficient holidays to cover that time.”

“School picks up / drop off ends up taking priority over career. Pick up / drop off is a frantic and stressful experience. Companies have given a flexible start and end time with core hours to relieve the congestion, stress, and inefficiency of having employees all start and finish at the same time. Yet schools still insist on

a 9am start and 3:15 finish. Why can't this be more flexible? Even a 20-minute flex would relieve congestion hugely."

"We have to stagger holidays to provide childcare and then have very limited time off all together. Considering asking for unpaid parental leave to cover school holidays but obviously this will have financial impact when everything has become more expensive."

"We were under immense strain and pressure we did not have family that we could rely on in this situation and while we could ask friends as a one off it was not a solution. We could not support our full-time jobs due to the hours of school and having no access to before and after school club as well as a really poor public transport service."

"It affects parents' work and studies, as well as the ability to stay on track."

"We are encouraged to work/study and be financially independent by both national and local governments. We strive daily to achieve this and the help with increased preschool provision helped my family and many of my friends' families to re-enter the workplace and advance their careers. However, it feels as if we have been set up to fail. As now with our children all at primary school the availability and cost of childcare makes working hard. My husband's boss is understanding, however mine is not so much. I actually sometimes wish I hadn't bothered re-entering the workforce when the nursery hours increased and remained a stay-at-home mum. We would be worse off financially but our stress levels would be lower and the home happier! But this is no longer an option as we are committed to financial outgoings, and I do love my job. Very short-sighted for the government to increase nursery provision to full days. However, we expect after-school, holiday and breakfast provision for children aged only 5yrs and over to be self-funded and available in every town. Especially when local councils/schools rarely respect, value, or even entertain the professional and essential services OOSC provide families with as they are not a 'statutory' service. Every school and council building should be available for OOSC lease as a priority. They shouldn't be seen as the optional babysitters. And they should be respected for the qualified, professional, and essential service they provide children and families."

"Having to cut working hours has meant that, with the cost of living, things are very hard. It would financially be better to not work than to work reduced hours due to out-of-school childcare issues."

"We have no family support; I have also been caring for my parents who have passed away. Even if changes are made it the economic damage will still be done"

"I have to make up my work hours after the children go to bed which means I am constantly tired. "

"I am unable to fulfil my expectations at work that I should be doing and when I should be available to be at work due to lack of Afterschool options that may be free for families at the school."

"My wife and I are full-time NHS consultants. We have a good income and can afford to pay for pre and after school care. For the first two years of my youngest daughter's primary school, she has not been able to access a full slot in after school care. This has led to some stress and the need to find local sixth form students to deliver childcare in a fashion that has not been consistent and somewhat haphazard. We

have managed to get by with a significant amount of micromanagement, some rearrangement of working hours and stress. It would have been much easier if we had reliable after school access to local service until 6pm."

"Longer time travelling in evenings to collect children than should be required. Eats into time for homework, dinner and clubs. Every school night is stressful."

"It's stressful and puts a strain on relationship with husband which has a detrimental impact on children too. All of the organisation of finding alternative childcare falls on me as the mum and on top of a stressful full-time job is compounding stress levels."

"I currently have care, but the service, which has been run for 20 years by a charity, has had funding withdrawn by Council. Will close at the end of term."

"No flexibility with work or buffer if one parent is busy workwise and unable to look after children."

"We can only manage to cover childcare as my husband works from home. It is very tricky when he is away with work, and I have to use annual leave to cover."

"Working part-time reduces my opportunity to advance at work and reduces my pension pot."

"Despite putting my child's name down on a list 3 years ago, and her having sibling priority for our childcare provider, we still have one after school a week where they just don't have the space. It is a continual juggle on this day, and I rely on a lot of goodwill from my employer."

"There is no before school club, or breakfast club at our school. As I am a teacher it means that I cannot work full-time because I cannot get to work in time for the start of my school day. This is because my partner works away those days and we have no other option. Even a breakfast club from 7:45 or 8:00 would be a huge game changer for us. I could then access more work opportunities, work full time again, advance my career, and ultimately ensure our family is more financially secure."

"We have (just) managed to get enough but the threat of losing it may mean we work less (NHS workers) having a negative impact on us and the health service."

"I have good access to childcare after school hours, but do not have access to a breakfast club for before school hours. I work in a hospital and many shifts start before my child's school day starts, this causes difficulty with rostering at work and puts strain on family and friends who I rely on to help out. "

"Waiting lists are long and the cost are high. This limits work and study opportunities for parents of school aged children. The quality of provision is also not always very good - more activity based, and enriching after-school care is really needed. At times, the lack of childcare provision has really impacted on my mental health and has also reduced my opportunities for promotion at work."

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