

## Growing Up in Scotland: Birth Cohort 2

### Patterns of childcare use amongst families with 10 month-old children

Paul Bradshaw

This document presents key findings on childcare from the second birth cohort (BC2) of the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study, surveyed for the first time during 2010/11 when children were aged 10 months. It considers the proportion of families who use regular childcare and details of their arrangements in terms of provider types and hours and days used per week. Issues of cost and perceptions of accessibility and availability are also discussed. Where possible, comparisons were made with data on childcare use from families in the first birth cohort (BC1) collected during 2005/6 when the cohort child was also ten-months old.

### Main Findings

- Around half of parents (52%) were regularly using childcare for the cohort child. This has decreased from BC1, where the equivalent figure was 60%. Much of the decrease is explained by a greater proportion of mothers in BC2 still being on maternity leave at the time of the interview.
- Compared with BC1, use of a single childcare arrangement had decreased (from 69% to 64%) with a corresponding increase in two arrangements (from 27% to 30%) and three or more arrangements (from 4% to 5%).
- Grandparents were the most common form of childcare used – used by 69% of BC2 families using childcare. Nurseries were the next most common provider (28%) followed by ‘other informal’ provision (18%) and then childminders (10%). These patterns are similar to BC1.
- 79% of families using childcare were using at least one informal arrangement and 39% were using at least one formal arrangement. Compared with BC1, use of any informal provision increased from 75%, whereas use of any formal provision has remained static. Those who were using formal childcare arrangements in BC2 were more likely to be using them in combination with an informal provider.
- On average, families using childcare did so for 22 hours per week. This is almost identical to the corresponding figure of 21 hours for BC1.
- The average weekly cost of childcare was £88. Comparing with BC1 figures indicates that in real terms, there has been an average increase in childcare costs for a 10 month old child of £12 per week, or approximately £624 per year.
- The proportion of parents reporting that childcare costs were ‘very easy’ to pay has reduced slightly from 14% to 10% whereas the proportion saying costs were difficult to pay increased a little from 21% to 24%.
- Only 11% of parents using childcare said that arranging it had been difficult. The most common reason given for finding it difficult (given by 45%) was a lack of availability. Cost was cited by 15% whilst difficulty caused by irregular or unusual working hours was mentioned by 8%.

## Use of childcare

A little over half of parents (52%) said they were regularly using childcare. This represents a decrease in childcare use for children aged 10 months since 2005/06 (60%).

The decrease is most likely related to the corresponding increase in duration of maternity leave between the two cohorts. A greater proportion of mothers in 2011/2012 were still on maternity leave at the time of the interview (when the child was aged around 10 months old) meaning there was less need for childcare at this age.

Use of childcare varied considerably according to the following socio-economic characteristics:

- **Employment:** Households where the child's mother was working part-time were most likely to be using childcare — 78% compared with 60% of households where the mother was working full-time and 25% where the mother was not working<sup>1</sup>.
- **Income:** 75% of families in the highest income group reported using childcare compared with 65% in the middle income group and 45% in the lowest income group.
- **Area deprivation:** 68% of families living in the least deprived areas used childcare compared with 54% of those in the most deprived areas.
- **Urban-rural characteristics:** Childcare use was considerably lower in remote areas (40-43%) compared with urban areas (53-54%).
- **Ethnicity:** Families in which the main carer was white were more likely to be using childcare (53%) than those where the main carer was from another ethnic background (33%).

## Number of childcare arrangements

The majority of families using childcare (64%) had only one arrangement in place, with most of the rest (a further 30%) having two arrangements. Just 5% were using 3 or more separate arrangements.

Compared with families in BC1, use of a single arrangement had decreased (from 69% to 64%) with a corresponding increase in two arrangements (from 27% to 30%) and three or more arrangements (from 4% to 5%).

Higher income families were more likely to be using multiple providers than were lower income families. The key difference was between those families in the top two and bottom three income groups where,

respectively, around 42% and 31% used two or more providers.

Ethnicity was associated with the number of childcare arrangements being used. Amongst families using childcare, 80% of those where the main carer was from a minority ethnic background used only one provider compared with 68% of families where the main carer was white.

## Types of childcare

The types of provision being used by families in BC2 were very similar to those used by families in BC1. Use of informal providers (such as grandparents or other relatives) was considerably more common than use of formal providers (such as nurseries and childminders).

The most common form of childcare being used was the child's grandparents (69%). Grandparents were also the dominant form of childcare for families in BC1, though their use has increased slightly – from 66% – since 2005/06. Younger mothers were particularly likely to be using grandparents for childcare (79% of those aged under 20 at the child's birth compared with 66% of mothers in their thirties).

Nurseries were the next most common provider, used by 28% of families using childcare. Use of nurseries (including private and local authority) was more common amongst older mothers, couple families and those living in the least deprived areas.

79% of families using childcare were using at least one informal arrangement and 39% were using at least one formal arrangement. 61% were *only* using informal arrangements, 21% were *only* using formal arrangements and 17% were using a mix of formal and informal provision.

The mix of informal and formal provision being used varied considerably by family socio-economic characteristics:

**Family type:** Compared with those in couple families, lone parents made greater use of informal provision (84% compared with 77%) and lower use of formal provision (27% compared with 41%). Lone parents were significantly more likely to be using *only* informal provision (73% compared with 59%) and less likely to be using *only* formal (16% compared with 23%) or a mix of both (11% compared with 19%).

**Working patterns:** Families where the child's mother worked part-time were slightly more likely to use some informal childcare than families where the mother worked full-time (78% compared with 74%). In contrast, families where the mother worked full-

<sup>1</sup> Excluding those households where the mother was still on maternity leave

time were most likely to be using *some* formal care (56% compared with 39% of families where the mother worked part-time) and to be using a mix of formal and informal care (28% compared with 18%).

**Ethnicity:** Main carers from white backgrounds were more likely than those from minority ethnic backgrounds to be using any type of informal provision (79% compared with 69%) though the proportions using any formal care did not vary according to ethnicity (around 40% for all parents). They were also more likely to be using a mix of informal and formal care (17% compared with 9%) and less likely to be using only formal arrangements (21% compared with 31%).

**Area deprivation:** 83% of families in the most deprived quintile who used childcare used at least one informal arrangement compared with 72% of families in the least deprived quintile. As level of area deprivation increased, so did use of only informal provision, whilst use of only formal carers, and use of a mix of formal and informal care decreased.

## Cost

41% of families paid something for their childcare whereas for 58% childcare was free and for 1% someone else paid for it. There are no significant differences in these figures when compared with BC1.

The average weekly cost of childcare for families in 2011/12 was £88. In 2005/06 the reported average weekly cost was lower, at £66. Adjusting the BC1 costs for inflation<sup>2</sup> shows £66 in 2005/06 to be equivalent to £76 in 2011/12 prices. Thus, in real terms, there has been an average increase in childcare costs for a 10 month old child of £12 per week with no corresponding increase in weekly hours used.

7% of parents in BC2 paid up to £20 per week, 23% paid between £21 and £50, 36% paid between £51 and £100, and 33% paid over £100.

## Making childcare arrangements

The vast majority of parents said they found it very (46%) or fairly (39%) easy to arrange suitable childcare for their child. Only 11% said it had been difficult, including just 3% who said it was very difficult.

Families in the highest income group were more likely to say they found arranging childcare 'very easy' than those in the bottom income group (54% compared with 39%).

The most common reason, given by 45% (n=325) of the parents who found arranging childcare difficult,

was a lack of availability. Cost was cited by 15%, whilst difficulty caused by irregular or unusual working hours was mentioned by 8%. A range of specific other reasons were given by 38% of the parents indicating the many different and complex factors affecting the choice of childcare for families.

11% of those using childcare felt they had a great deal of choice with regard to childcare arrangements. 34% reported 'quite a lot' of choice, 42% said they hadn't very much choice and 13% felt they had none at all. There has been a favourable change in these perceptions since 2005 with parents in BC2 generally perceiving greater choice in their childcare than parents in BC1.

## Summary

Changes to maternity leave and pay introduced by the Work and Families Act 2006, have had a clear impact on use of childcare for children aged 10 months in Scotland. With more mothers still on leave at 10 months, use of childcare is lower.

Parents in BC2, whilst using childcare for a similar average number of hours each week, spread those hours over a greater number of providers. Whilst the dominant *specific* types of childcare provision – grandparents and nurseries – were similar between the two cohorts, BC2 parents more likely to be drawing on some informal provision – though their use of formal providers remained similar to parents in BC1. The suggestion is, therefore, that formal provision is being used for shorter durations by BC2 parents who nevertheless still need it in some respect.

There was a notable difference in the reasons given by parents for using different types of provision. For example, whilst aspects of 'nurturing' – for example, through showing the child affection – was a common reason cited for using grandparents, it was very rarely cited in relation to nurseries. This may be an area worth developing, or marketing, in relation to nursery provision to increase the appeal of nursery care for parents with young children who may otherwise rely wholly on grandparents for care.

The shorter durations of formal provision may be explained by the rise in childcare costs. This was accompanied by a small rise in the proportion of parents who reported finding it difficult to meet those costs.

The vast majority of BC2 parents found it easy to arrange their childcare and they also felt they had more choice than those in BC1. This suggests that childcare information resources, such as the Scottish Family Information Service, are improving parents' knowledge and awareness of the services available to them.

<sup>2</sup> Using the HM Treasury GDP Deflator Index

Further information on the Growing Up in Scotland study can be found at: [www.growingupinScotland.org.uk](http://www.growingupinScotland.org.uk)

If you require further copies of this research findings please contact:

Dissemination Officer  
The Scottish Government  
Education Analytical Services  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

[recs.admin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:recs.admin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Online Copies

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>.

If you have any further queries about social research, or would like further copies of this research findings summary document or the full research report, please contact us at [socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or on 0131-244 7560.



**The Scottish  
Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



centre for research on  
families and relationships

**ScotCen**  
Social Research that works for society



Social Science in Government

ISBN: 978-1-78256-380-8

APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS13858 (01/13)