



Living in Lancashire Survey

Childcare

October 2011

www.lancashire.gov.uk



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5 December 2011

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1. Executive summary

This wave of the Living in Lancashire panel looked at people's views on childcare. The survey was sent by email or by post to all 3,240 members of the panel on 7 September and the fieldwork ended on 14 October 2011. In total 2,208 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 68%.

1.1 Key findings

- Over half of respondents who are parents or carers of children aged 14 or under use no formal childcare (57%). The most commonly used types of formal childcare are before- or after-school clubs (24%) and private day nurseries (13%).
- A third of respondents who use formal childcare do so every, or almost every, day (35%).
- The most common reasons that respondents who are parents/carers don't use formal childcare are that they prefer to look after their child at home (40%) or prefer for relatives or friends to look after their child (26%). A fifth of respondents said that childcare available locally is too expensive (21%).
- Over half of respondents who are parents/carers have an informal childcare arrangement with a relative (53%). Around two fifths of parents/carers don't use informal childcare (39%).
- Just over two fifths of respondents who are parents/carers have tried to get childcare information in the last five years (44%). The most common sources of information used were through a friend (37%), through education services (36%) or on the internet (31%).
- The most common sources that respondents would use to access childcare information are friends (32%), the internet (31%) and education services (31%).
- Only a third of respondents feel very or fairly well informed about childcare in Lancashire (33%). Respondents who are parents/carers are more likely to feel very or fairly well informed (59%).
- All services provided by the Family Information Service (FIS) are thought to be very or fairly important by at least half of respondents.
- Around two fifths of respondents would prefer to access the FIS through the internet (38%) and over a quarter would prefer to contact the FIS by phone (28%).

1.2 Recommendations

- Cost is one of the most common barriers to using formal childcare and distributing information about free early-years education was thought by parents to be one of the most important services the FIS provides. Look at promoting the financial assistance available for childcare and, in particular, the Family Information Service as a source of this information.
- Currently the Family Information Service is not a commonly used source for childcare information. Look to raise the profile of the FIS as the services it provides are felt by many respondents to be important. This is supported by a set of focus groups held recently that found that, while awareness of the service was low, participants felt the service would be very useful to them.
- In particular, the Family Information Service should promote that it has advice on how to assess the quality of childcare settings and has information available to support families with children that have special needs as these are felt to be the most important services the FIS provides.
- Make the information that the Family Information Service provides available on the internet as many participants would like to access the FIS in this way.

2. Introduction

Lancashire County Council has used Living in Lancashire regularly since August 2001 (formerly known as Life in Lancashire). A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each wave of Living in Lancashire is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning, ie the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be representative of the population as a whole.

3. Research objectives

The objective of this survey was to look at people's views on childcare. Questions looked specifically at:

- if panel members make use of formal and informal childcare;
- why panel members choose not to use formal childcare;
- how panel members get information about childcare; and
- panel members' perception of the importance of services that the Family Information Service provides.

4. Methodology

This wave of Living in Lancashire research was sent to 3,240 members of the panel on 7 September. A reminder was sent on 28 September, with a final closing date of 14 October 2011.

The survey was conducted through a postal questionnaire, and an online version of the same questionnaire being emailed to members who had previously requested to take part online. The postal questionnaire was sent to 2,276 members and the online questionnaire was sent to 964 members.

In total, 2,208 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 68%.

All data are weighted by age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled to match the effective response of 1,567, which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

4.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1,000 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

The following table shows what the percentage differences between two samples on a statistic must be greater than, to be statistically significant.

Size of sample A	Size of sample B	50/50	70/30	90/10
100	100	14%	13%	8%
100	200	12%	11%	7%
500	1000	5%	5%	3%
2000	2000	3%	3%	2%

(Confidence interval at 95% certainty for a comparison of two samples)

For example, where the size of sample A and sample B is 2,000 responses in each and the percentage result in each group you are comparing is around 50% in each category, the difference in the results needs to be more than 3% to be statistically significant. This is to say that the difference in the results of the two groups of people is not due to chance alone and is a statistically valid difference (eg of opinion, service usage).

For each question in the survey, comparisons have been made between different sub-groups of respondents (eg age, gender, disability, ethnicity, geographic area) to look for statistically significant differences in opinion. Statistically valid differences between sub-groups are described in the main body of the report.

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

5. Main research findings

All panel members were asked if they are a parent or carer of children aged 14 or under. A quarter of respondents are parents or carers (25%) while three quarters aren't (75%).

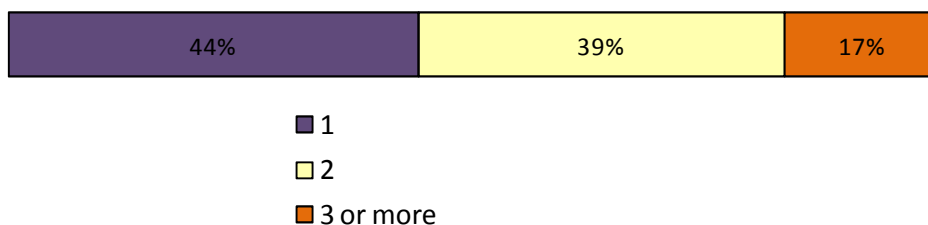
Chart 1 - Are you a parent or carer of children aged 14 or under?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2146, weighted 1590)

Just under half of respondents who are parents or carers have one child aged 14 or under (44%). Nearly a fifth have three or more children aged 14 or under.

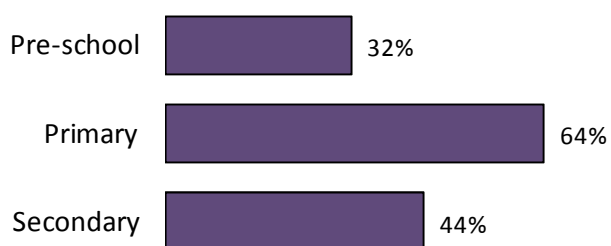
Chart 2 - How many children aged 14 or under do you have?



Base: Respondents who have children under 15 (unweighted 265, weighted 340)

A third of respondents who are parents or carers of children aged 14 or under have children of pre-school age (32%), nearly two thirds have primary school age children (64%) and two fifths have secondary school age children (44%).

Chart 3 - Which of the following groups are your children aged 14 or under in?



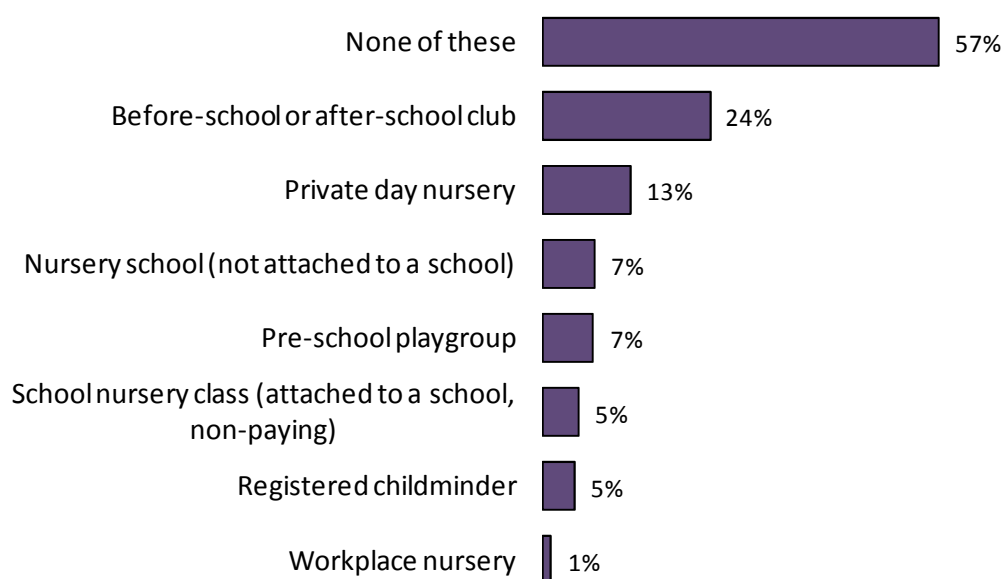
Base: Respondents who have children under 14 (unweighted 268, weighted 346)

The following questions were only answered by respondents who are parents or carers of children aged 14 or under.

5.1 Formal childcare

Respondents were asked about the types of formal childcare they use. Over half use no formal childcare (57%). The most commonly used forms are before- or after-school clubs (24%) and private day nurseries (13%).

Chart 4 - Do you currently use any of the following types of formal childcare?

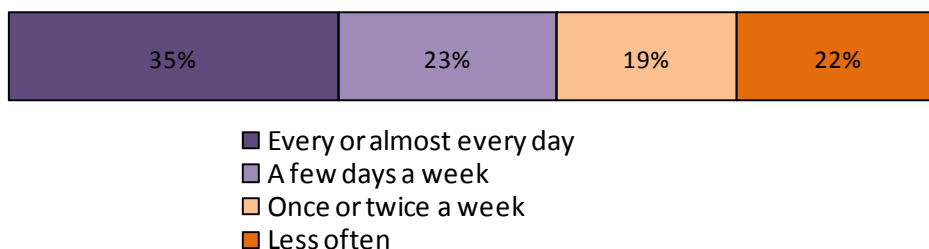


Base: Respondents who have children under 14 (unweighted 347, weighted 416)

Respondents in Chorley and Hyndburn are more likely to use before- or after-school clubs (47% and 46% respectively). Respondents with only one child and respondents with secondary school age children are more likely to use none of the formal childcare options given (66% and 77% respectively).

Respondents who use formal childcare were asked how often in a typical week they use this childcare. A third of respondents use formal childcare every, or almost every, day (35%).

Chart 5 - In a typical working week, how often do you make use of formal childcare?

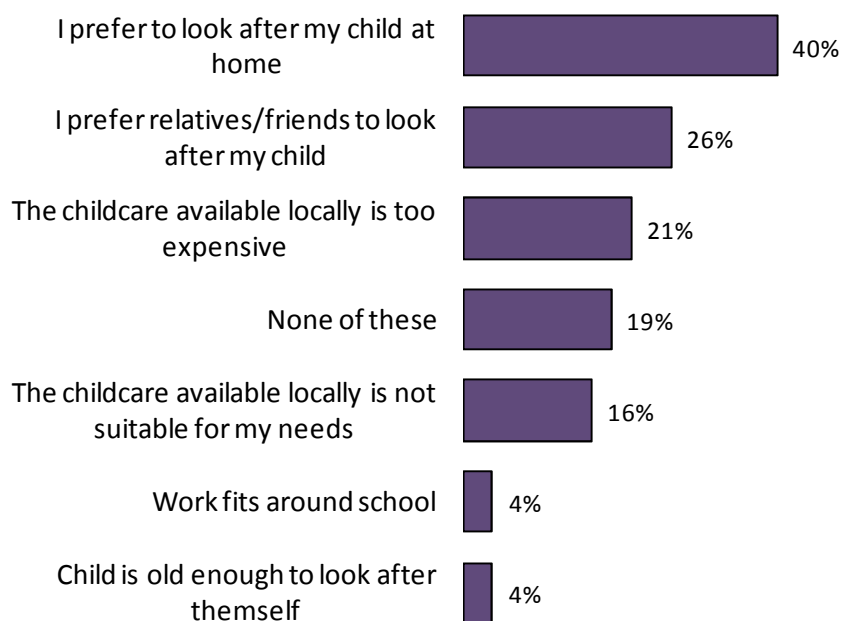


Base: Respondents who have children under 14 and use formal childcare (unweighted 152, weighted 199)

Respondents with pre-school or primary school age children are more likely to use formal childcare every, or almost every, day (43% and 42% respectively).

Respondents who don't use formal childcare were asked why they don't. The most common answers are that respondents prefer to look after their child at home (40%) or prefer for relatives or friends to look after their child (26%). A fifth of respondents said that childcare available locally is too expensive (21%).

Chart 6 - Which of the following reasons best describes why you do not use any of the types of formal childcare?



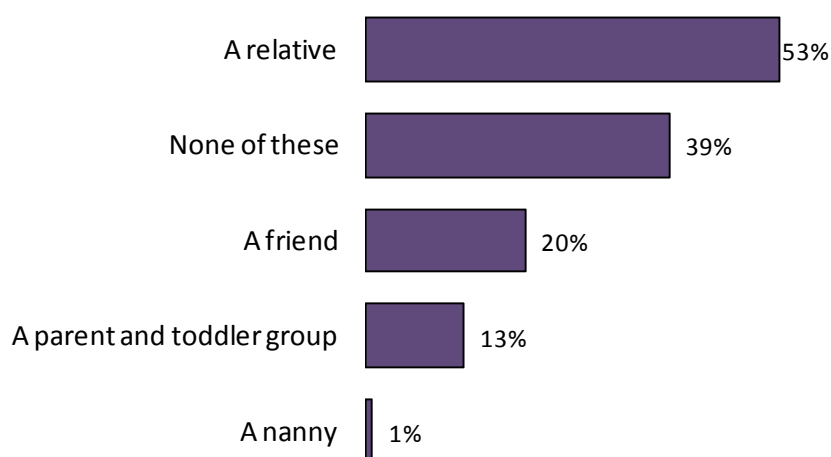
Base: Respondents who have children under 14 and don't use formal childcare (unweighted 231, weighted 273)

Respondents from Pendle are more likely to prefer to look after their child at home (68%).

5.2 Informal childcare

Respondents were then asked about their use of informal childcare. Over half of respondents have an informal childcare arrangement with a relative (53%). Around two fifths of respondents don't use informal childcare (39%).

Chart 7 - Now, thinking about informal childcare, do you use any of the following types of informal childcare?



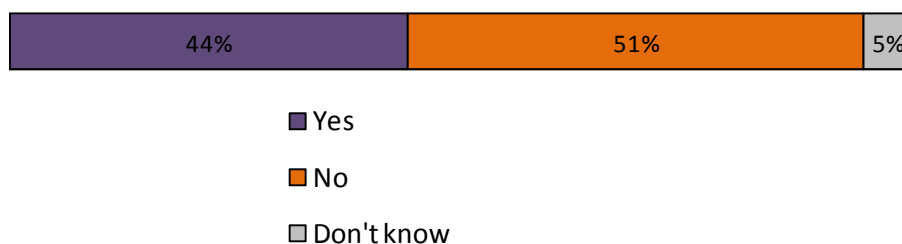
Base: Respondents who have children under 14 (unweighted 332, weighted 409)

Respondents aged 25-44 and respondents who work part-time are more likely to have an informal childcare arrangement with a relative (57% and 69% respectively). Respondents in socio-economic group DE are more likely not to have informal childcare arrangements (57%).

5.3 Information on childcare

Respondents were asked if they have tried to obtain any information about childcare in their local area in the past five years. Just over two fifths of respondents have tried to get childcare information (44%).

Chart 8 - Have you tried to obtain any information about childcare arrangements or facilities in your local area in the past 5 years for your child/children?

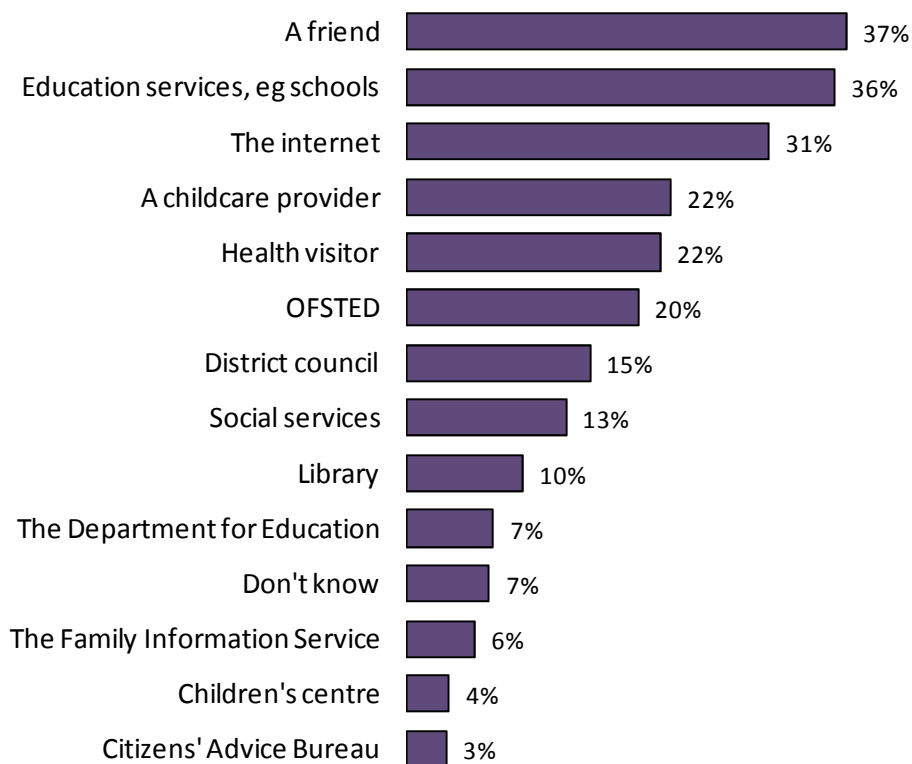


Base: Respondents who have children under 14 (unweighted 340, weighted 423)

Respondents with pre-school age children are more likely to have tried to obtain information about childcare in the last five years (67%).

Respondents who had tried to get childcare information were asked where they had tried to get it. The most common answers were through a friend (37%) or through education services (36%). Around a third of respondents had used the internet (31%). Only one in twenty respondents had used the Family Information Service (6%).

Chart 9 - Where did you try to get this information?

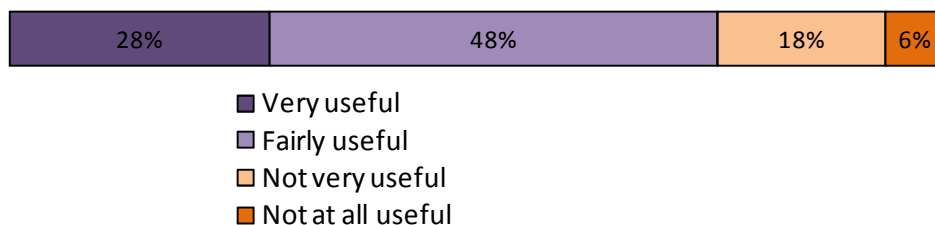


Base: Respondents who have children under 14 and have tried to get information about childcare (unweighted 171, weighted 218)

Respondents with one child are more likely to have asked a friend for information on childcare (53%).

The majority of respondents who had tried to find information about childcare found the information they received useful (76%).

Chart 10 - How useful was this information to you?



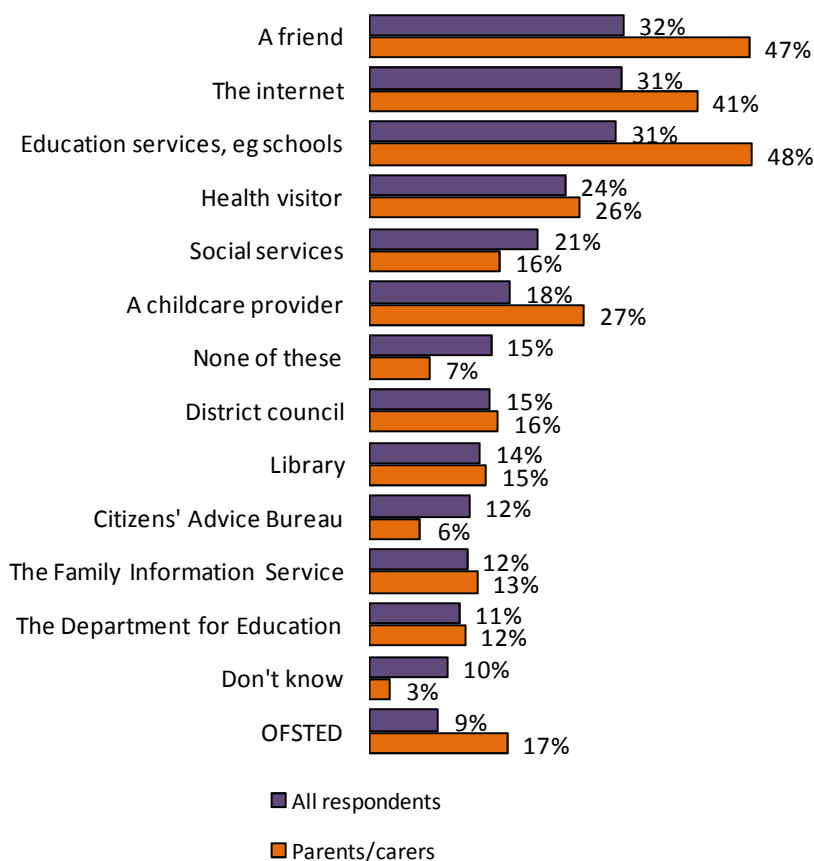
Base: Respondents who have children under 14 and have tried to get information about childcare (unweighted 163, weighted 207)

All respondents (including those who aren't parents or carers of children aged 14 or under) were asked who they would contact to get information on general childcare.

The most common responses were friends (32%), the internet (31%) and education services (31%). Around one in eight respondents said they would contact the Family Information Service (12%).

Parents/carers are more likely to contact a friend (47%), education services (48%), a childcare provider (27%) or OFSTED (17%).

Chart 11 - Which of the following, if any, would you contact to get information on general childcare?



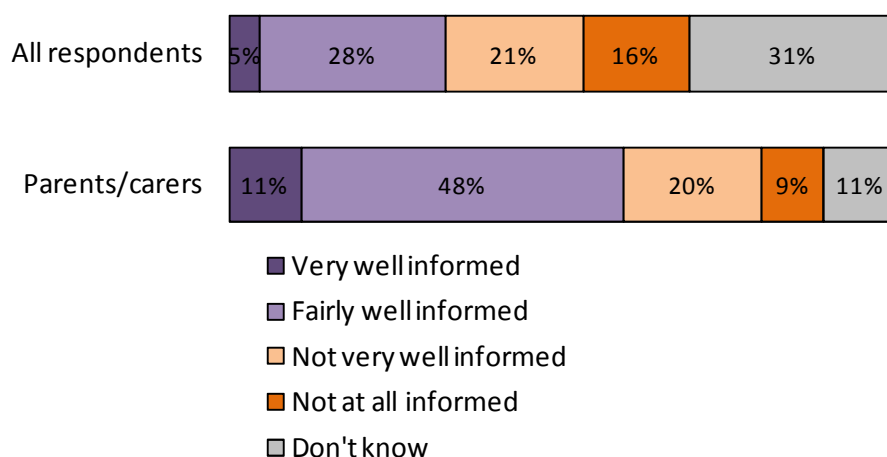
Base: All respondents (unweighted 2036, weighted 1540)

BME respondents are more likely to contact a health visitor for information (36%) and disabled respondents are more likely to contact social services (27%). Parents of pre-school age children are more likely to contact a childcare provider (40%) or their district council (22%).

Only a third of respondents feel very or fairly well informed about childcare in Lancashire (33%). A significant proportion of respondents answered don't know to this question (31%).

Unsurprisingly, parents/carers are more likely to feel very or fairly well informed about childcare services in Lancashire (59%).

Chart 12 - Generally, how well informed do you feel about childcare services in Lancashire?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2043, weighted 1543)

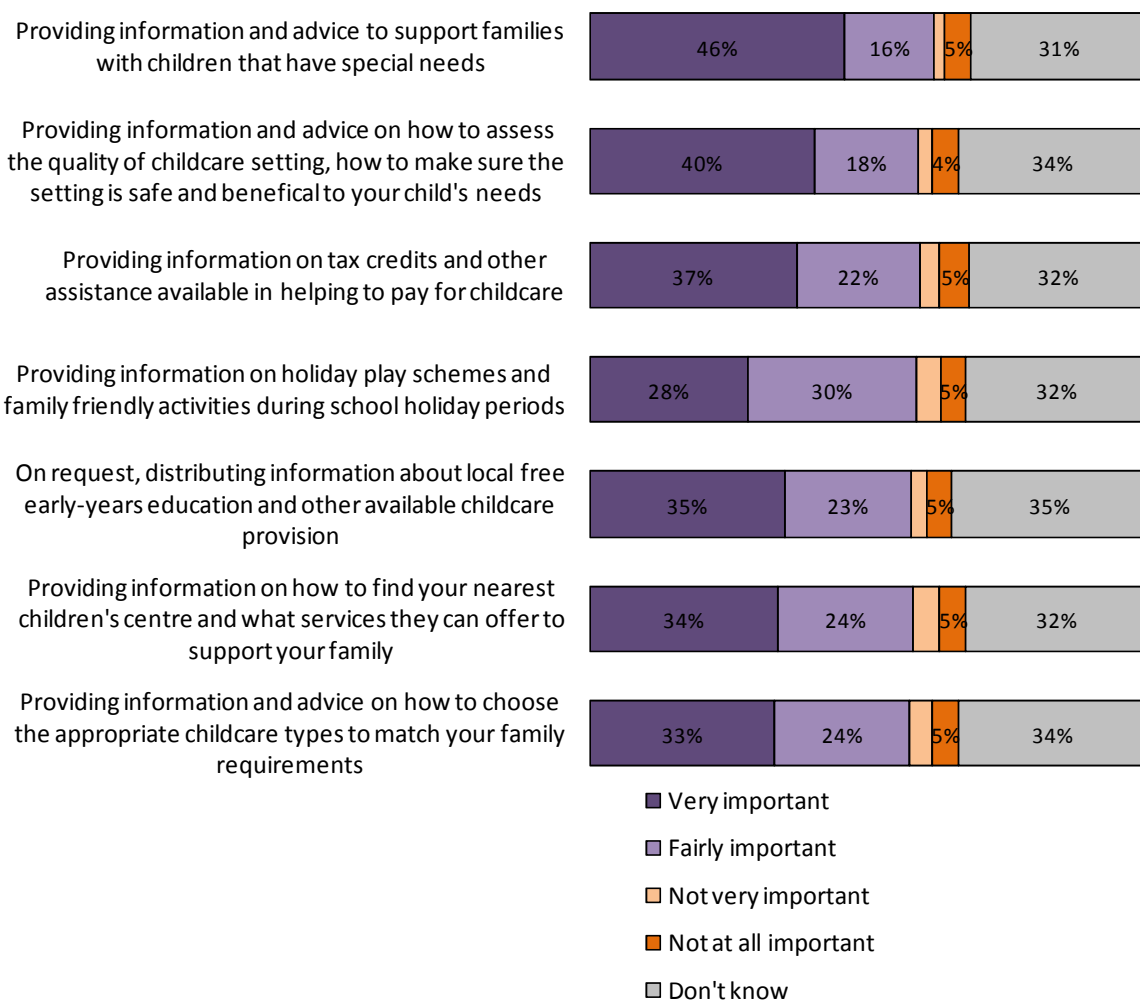
Female and BME respondents are also more likely to feel very or fairly well informed (37% and 44% respectively). Respondents aged 60 and over are more likely to say they don't know (38%) presumably as childcare is likely to be less relevant to them and so they would not look to be informed about it.

5.4 Family Information Service

Respondents were asked how important they think a range of services that the Family Information Service offers are. For all services, around a third of respondents said they don't know.

All services are thought to be very or fairly important by at least half of respondents. The most important service is felt to be providing information and advice to support families with children that have special needs (46% very important) followed by providing information and advice on how to assess the quality of childcare setting (40% very important).

Chart 13 - The Lancashire Family Information Service (FIS) is responsible for providing a variety support services specialising in childcare advice. How important are each of the following services that the FIS provides?



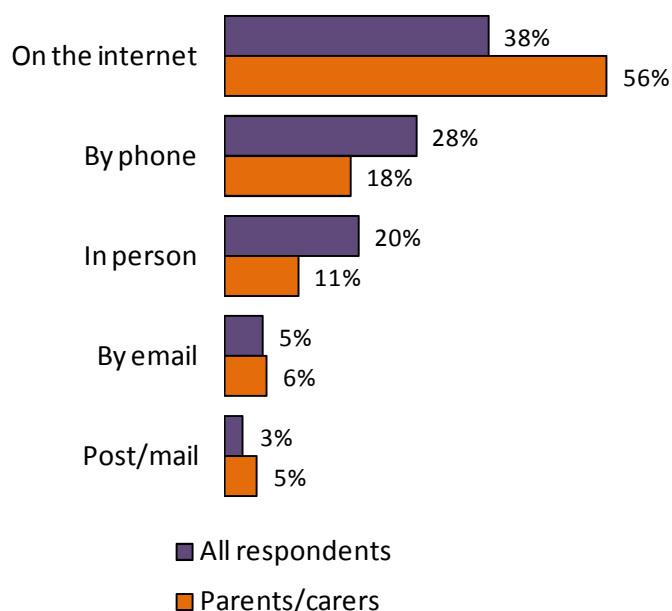
Base: All respondents (unweighted 1833, weighted 1406)

Parents of children aged 14 or under are less likely to answer don't know to each service and more likely to think that distributing information about local free early-years education and other available childcare provision is very important (49%).

Finally, panel members were asked how they would prefer to access the Family Information Service. Around two fifths of respondents would prefer to access the FIS through the internet (38%) and over a quarter would prefer to contact the FIS by phone (28%).

Parents/carers are more likely to want to contact the FIS through the internet (56%).

Chart 14 - How would you prefer to access the Family Information Service?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 1590, weighted 1250)

Respondents from socio-economic groups AB and C1 are more likely to prefer to access the Family Information Service on the internet (43% and 46% respectively).

6. Key findings and recommendations

6.1 Key findings

- Over half of respondents who are parents or carers of children aged 14 or under use no formal childcare (57%). The most commonly used types of formal childcare are before- or after-school clubs (24%) and private day nurseries (13%).
- A third of respondents who use formal childcare do so every, or almost every, day (35%).
- The most common reasons that respondents who are parents/carers don't use formal childcare are that they prefer to look after their child at home (40%) or prefer for relatives or friends to look after their child (26%). A fifth of respondents said that childcare available locally is too expensive (21%).
- Over half of respondents who are parents/carers have an informal childcare arrangement with a relative (53%). Around two fifths of parents/carers don't use informal childcare (39%).
- Just over two fifths of respondents who are parents/carers have tried to get childcare information in the last five years (44%). The most common sources of information used were through a friend (37%), through education services (36%) or on the internet (31%).
- The most common sources that respondents would use to access childcare information are friends (32%), the internet (31%) and education services (31%).
- Only a third of respondents feel very or fairly well informed about childcare in Lancashire (33%). Respondents who are parents/carers are more likely to feel very or fairly well informed (59%).
- All services provided by the Family Information Service (FIS) are thought to be very or fairly important by at least half of respondents.
- Around two fifths of respondents would prefer to access the FIS through the internet (38%) and over a quarter would prefer to contact the FIS by phone (28%).

6.2 Recommendations

- Cost is one of the most common barriers to using formal childcare and distributing information about free early-years education was thought by parents to be one of the most important services the FIS provides. Look at promoting the financial assistance available for childcare and, in particular, the Family Information Service as a source of this information.

- Currently the Family Information Service is not a commonly used source for childcare information. Look to raise the profile of the FIS as the services it provides are felt by many respondents to be important. This is supported by a set of focus groups held recently that found that, while awareness of the service was low, participants felt the service would be very useful to them.
- In particular, the Family Information Service should promote that it has advice on how to assess the quality of childcare settings and has information available to support families with children that have special needs as these are felt to be the most important services the FIS provides.
- Make the information that the Family Information Service provides available on the internet as many participants would like to access the FIS in this way.

Appendix 1: Socio-Economic-Group Definitions

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

Group A

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

Group B

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principle officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people, previously grade B, and their widows

Group C1

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

Group C2

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers with responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group D

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group E

- All those entirely dependent on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income