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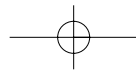
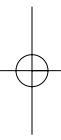
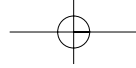
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# Childcare Needs and Preferences in Ballymun

## Part 4



## Comment: Who Cares for the Children?

Childcare in Ireland has been on the National Agenda for over 20 years. However, in the past, it was an issue mainly for the middle classes. It was not until Ireland's economic growth, that we saw a rise in employment, and in particular women's employment, and a government response to the issue of childcare. That response was however aimed at fuelling the Celtic Tiger.

Who cares for the Children is a question that confronts all working parents, but in particular those parenting alone and working in low wage employment. The chronic lack of affordable, high quality and need-based childcare options have prevented many people from returning to education, training or even entering the labour market. In this booklet, over three quarters of parents informed us that they themselves or their partner cared for their children at home. When they were asked if they had been prevented from taking up employment, training or education, (table 3) almost half had cited lack of childcare as being the issue which prevented them from taking a job, and one in five parents had to quit a job due to lack of childcare.

As a strategy for ending child poverty, childcare can play a crucial role on a number of fronts. An early start in education focusing on learning, play, social skills and responsibility can very often prepare children for the formal education system. And make that journey a little easier for them. At the same time, giving parents the opportunity to return to education and training can improve the employment prospects of the parents thus improving the economic status of the family. Supporting parents and children through the education years with after schools clubs, breakfast clubs and extra curricular activities can also lighten the load of parents and contribute to greater retention rates in schools.

Half of parents cited their preference for caring for their own children at home, with others preferring to have a family relative or friend being the carer. This statistic would suggest that parents want and need options. Options that will allow them to avail of different types of childcare as their needs change. Whether the need is for childcare in the home, in a nursery or by private qualified and registered childminders. Combinations of these options must be available to meet the need of the child and the parent.

Childcare is for children and if we are to meet their needs then we must have a comprehensive, multi tiered system of universal support for children and their families. To do anything less is to let down our future.

*Anne Keating, Ballymun Women's Resource Centre*

Those who do not use Ballymun childcare facilities were asked why this was so. The responses can be summarised as follows:

- Don't need facilities because use family and friends.
- Didn't know about Ballymun facilities.
- Too expensive.
- No places available/on waiting list.
- Don't like the idea of using childcare facilities.

“Nearly one in four (24.1 %) had to turn down a job offer and more than one in five (21.3%) had to quit a job due to lack of suitable childcare arrangements”

**Table 3 Lack of childcare in the last 12 months**

<i>Lack of Childcare</i>	<i>%</i>
Prevented you from looking for a job?	49.5
Stopped you from taking a study or training course?	38.9
Stopped you from changing the hours you regularly work?	28.7
Made you turn down a job?	24.1
Made you quit a job?	21.3
Made you quit a study or training course?	13.0
Other	10.3

**Use of Childcare facilities in Ballymun**

Table 4 shows the percentage of parents who use childcare facilities provided in Ballymun.

**Table 4 Use of Ballymun childcare facilities**

<i>Facilities</i>	<i>%</i>
Tir na nOg Day Nursery	15.0
Ballymun East Community Centre	13.3
BITE	10.0
Women's Resource Centre	8.3
Axis	8.3
Aisling Project (Virgin Mary)	8.3
Our Lady's Nursery	6.7
Aisling Project (Holy Spirit)	6.7
Scoil an tSearchtar Laoch	5.0
Early Start	3.3
Aisling Project (St Josephs)	3.3
St Margaret's Travellers	1.7
CAFTA	1.7
Glor na Geal	1.7
Geraldstown House	1.7
Ballymun Playground Association	1.7
Bernadette Hopkins	1.7
BEST	1.7

## Introduction to the Facts and Figures

To gather the key data for this Fact File, Ballymun Partnership commissioned a company called Vision 21 to conduct a survey with ten percent of Ballymun residents, over the Christmas period 2002.

Addresses were randomly selected from a database which we constructed using information from Dublin City Council Regional Office, from Ballymun Post Office and Ballymun Regeneration Limited. The target sample size was 485 households, which was 10% of the total number of households, 4,850, in Ballymun at the time of the survey. The survey results tell us that out of these 485 households, there were 1,516 members. If we multiply this figure by 10 we can estimate that the total population for Ballymun is 15,160 people. On average there are 3.14 persons per household.

When reading the facts that follow you can refer to the total household number 4,850, and the total population number, 15,160, where relevant, in order to get a real understanding of the actual numbers of people from the percentages given.

**The facts and figures**

Parents with children attending primary school or younger non-school going children were asked about childcare arrangements. Many of the questions are comparable to questions asked in the Quarterly National Household Study in the 4th Quarter of 2002, however the results from the national survey were not available at the time of us going to print.

**Numbers of Children**

Half of households (2,242 homes) included children attending primary school or younger non-school going children.

**Types of Childcare**

Parents in these households were asked to indicate which type of childcare they usually used during weekdays. As can be seen in the table below the vast majority of children were cared for either by the parents themselves or unpaid relatives. Crèche/nursery and after school activity-based facilities were the next most frequently used arrangements.

**Table 1 Type of childcare usually used**

<i>Types of childcare</i>	<i>%</i>
Childcare minded at home by me/partner	78.2
Unpaid relative (or family friend) in your own home	29.5
Unpaid relative (or family friend) in his/her own home	25.3
Crèche/Nursery	11.0
After school activity-based facility	8.9
Homework club	5.9
Paid relative (or family friend)/childminder in his/her own home	5.5
Playgroup/pre-school/sessional childcare	4.6
Paid relative (or family friend)/childminder in your own home	3.4
Au Pair/Nanny	0.4
Naionra	0.4
Work-based crèche	0.4
Montessori school	0.0
Special needs facility	0.0
Other	1.3

**Type of childcare preferred**

As Table 2 illustrates, although 78.2% of parents usually mind their own children at home, this is the preferred method by only 56.2%. This suggests that parents are minding children at home because suitable alternatives are not available. To put this in terms of numbers, the survey shows that 1860 parents mind their children at home, and this method is the preferred method of only 1320 parents, suggesting that 540 parents are minding their children at home because suitable alternatives are not available. Other preferred methods included unpaid relatives and crèche/nurseries.

“540 parents are minding children because there are no suitable alternatives”

**Table 2 Preferred type of childcare**

<i>Types of childcare</i>	<i>%</i>
Childcare minded at home by me/partner	56.2
Unpaid relative (or family friend) in your own home	9.8
Crèche/Nursery	9.4
Unpaid relative (or family friend) in his/her own home	7.2
After school activity-based facility	5.5
Paid relative (or family friend)/childminder in his/her own home	4.3
Playgroup/pre-school/sessional childcare	3.4
Paid relative (or family friend)/childminder in our own home	1.7
Homework club	0.9
Other	0.9
Au Pair/Nanny	0.4
Montessori school	0.4
Naionra	0.0
Work-based crèche	0.0
Special needs facility	0.0

**Reasons why parents need childcare**

Parents were asked to indicate the main reason why they used childcare on a weekly basis. Nearly six in ten (59.6%) reported that it enabled them to work, 17.4% used childcare to provide a social or educational outlet for the child, and 9.0% said it enabled the parent to participate in education or training. Fourteen percent of parents indicated ‘other’ reasons for using childcare, these included allowing time to go shopping and provide free time for the parents.

**Barriers as a result of lack of childcare**

Parents with children attending primary school or younger non-school going children were asked whether lack of childcare had prevented them from doing anything in the last 12 months. As Table 3 shows nearly half (49.5%) had been prevented from looking for a job due to lack of available childcare. Nearly two in five (38.9%) had been prevented from participating in education or training, and nearly three in ten (28.6%) had been prevented from changing their work hours. Nearly one in four (24.1%) had to turn down a job offer and more than one in five (21.3%) had to quit a job due to lack of suitable childcare arrangements.