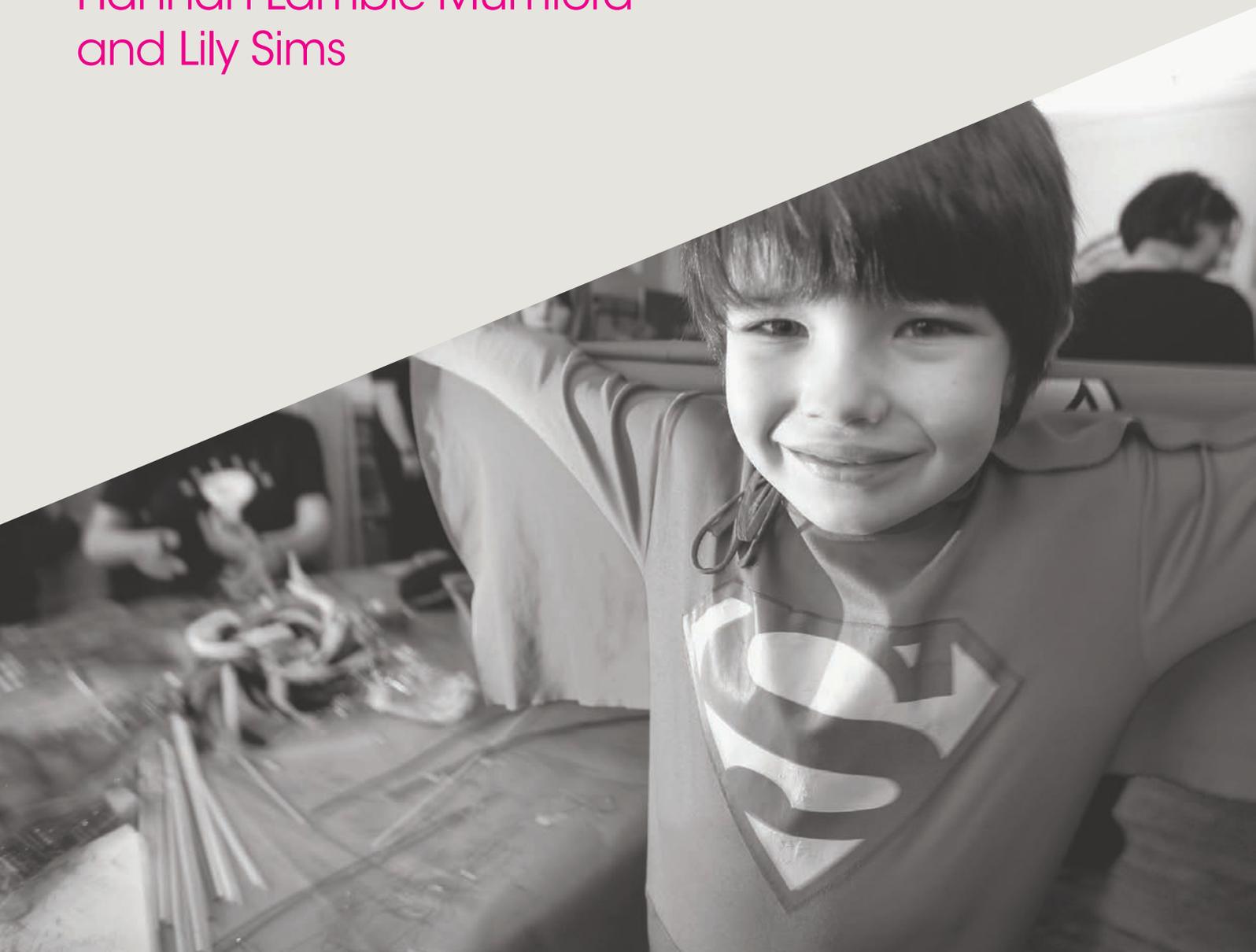# EXTENDED SCHOOLS

Moussa Haddad,
Hannah Lambie-Mumford
and Lily Sims

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have seen a rise in charitable food provision to children – in the form of food banks and feeding initiatives, such as breakfast clubs and holiday clubs. This is symptomatic of a shift in response to experiences of poverty away from a statutory, rights-based entitlement towards a patchwork of charitable provision. This report explores the potential for the extended schools approach to go well beyond the immediate issue of food provision to form a more inclusive, upstream policy approach, providing valuable resources to all children and their families.

POLICY AND PROVISION OF EXTENDED SCHOOLS

Extended schools were embedded in the UK Labour government's 2003 Every Child Matters programme. The vision was first articulated in 1997 in the *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* green paper, which committed £170 million through the Lottery New Opportunities Fund as start-up grants for breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs – known as the 'Out of School Childcare Initiative'. Later, the 2004, 10-year strategy, *Choice for Parents: the best start for children*, set out the requirement that, by 2010, all parents of primary-age children would have access to affordable childcare from 8am to 6pm all year round (available in at least half of schools by 2008), and by 2010 all secondary schools would be open from 8am to 6pm all year round, providing access to a range of activities (at least a third of schools making this available by 2008).[1] The more detailed requirements were set out in the 2005 extended schools prospectus, *Extended Schools: access to opportunities and services for all*.[2]

The government was clear from the outset that extended schools were an important part of its childcare strategy. Although by 2010, most schools claimed to operate some extended school provision, it was far from the comprehensive vision originally articulated. After 2010, the vision faltered and, by 2011, ring-fenced funding for extended schools in England ended. Since then, funding and provision has been piecemeal and there is no longer a clear requirement from the government to offer extended schools. Government figures available (from the Department for Education's Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2013)

show that, as of 2013: 13,400 after-school settings were offering a total of 612,400 places; 12,800 before-school settings were offering a total number of 469,200 places; and 7,200 holiday settings were offering a total number of 341,400 places.

A 'right to request' extended school provision for parents was introduced in 2016, but there is little data about its take-up or usefulness.[3]

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic evidence base is extremely limited and in need of new, contemporary research. This evidence base does, however, draw attention to some key lessons learned from the earlier stages of extended schools policy. In particular, it points to the need for more systematic evaluative evidence on the impact of this type of intervention, as well as more clear and coherent guidance from the government on how best to deliver these programmes. Previous research also highlights the importance of ensuring that the extended schools agenda is part of a broader, more holistic approach to the structural determinants of deprivation and educational inequality.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the Department for Education's Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015 was analysed to explore, in particular, the role extended schools can play in providing childcare – from the perspectives of parents with school-aged children.

Work and childcare

Extended schools have the potential to act as an important form of childcare by helping to support parents find the best balance between work and time spent with their children. Childcare is a major barrier to employment for non-working parents: two-thirds (65 per cent) said they would work if they could arrange good-quality childcare that was convenient, reliable and affordable. This was most true for the least well-off households, but even in the highest income group, almost half (47.9 per cent) of non-working parents felt this way. Although half of non-working parents (50.2 per cent) say they do not work because they want to stay at home with their children or because their children are too young, this is in the context of the current childcare environment.

The availability and affordability of holiday childcare are both significant issues in holding back part-time workers from working longer hours (30.2 per cent and 38.3 per cent respectively). Even for full-time workers, there is a significant minority who would work more hours if holiday childcare was available for more hours each day (16.6 per cent) and was more affordable (20.5 per cent).

Affordability

Around half (47.7 per cent) of respondents who expressed a view said that affordability in their local area for a family like theirs was 'very poor' or 'fairly poor', while 29 per cent of all respondents spontaneously said that they were unsure – chiming with other findings that suggest a lack of information on childcare is an issue. Of those using childcare, only a fifth (18.8 per cent) said that they found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to meet the costs. The gap between these two findings suggests that a significant proportion of respondents are put off using childcare because of the cost. Looking at holiday care in particular, for all but the highest earning income group, around half agree or strongly agree that they have difficulty finding childcare that they can afford during the school holidays.

Improving childcare

For parents, availability (32.5 per cent), affordability (16.3 per cent), flexibility (21.8 per cent) and suitability (23.7 per cent) were all important areas where improvement was needed in the childcare on offer. Given that parents need a number of things from childcare, and looking at responses elsewhere, we can discern that, for many parents, a number of improvements may be required for them to be able to achieve their optimal work-life balance. Looking at out-of-hours childcare in particular, around a quarter of parents of school-aged children with a partner working full time said that working before 8am (25.4 per cent) or after 6pm (24 per cent) causes problems with childcare. Finally, among the quarter (23.7 per cent) of respondents who find it difficult to arrange suitable childcare in the school holidays, affordability was the biggest single issue (for one-third, or 33.9 per cent, of respondents), while availability (20.5 per cent) and quality or appropriateness (14.5 per cent) were also raised by a significant proportion of respondents.

Formal and informal childcare

Nearly a third (31.1 per cent) of respondents reported using informal childcare in the previous week. Of these, one-third (32.3 per cent) said that greater affordability would make them start using formal childcare, while smaller proportions cited issues around flexibility, availability and quality.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Extended schools can play a number of roles: providing childcare in a trusted setting; acting as a wider community hub; contributing to child social and educational development; reducing attainment gaps; and fulfilling a social justice function by helping poorer children in particular. In the context of food, extended schools can help to move responses from ad hoc, piecemeal approaches based

on poverty alleviation, to systematic approaches that also take into account the drivers of poverty and food insecurity.

Extended schools: from statutory to charity. There has been a slow creep from the systematic, statutory intent of New Labour's extended schools programme to the piecemeal landscape of today. This is a result of the original policy intent not being matched by the appropriate statutory framework; of funding shortfalls; and of a political environment that has shifted away from statutory provision towards a mixture of individual self-reliance and charity plugging some gaps.

Extended schools as a deprivation intervention. There are many approaches that can be taken to ensure that deprived children benefit from extended schools, ranging from a fully universal approach, through progressive universalism, to a heavily targeted system. If policymakers are serious about developing an extended schools model from which more deprived children derive the maximum possible benefits, then evaluating the best way to do this is essential.

Extended schools as a model: prescription versus autonomy. The current UK approach to extended schools does not prescribe a particular model. On the one hand, this allows schools the autonomy to respond to their local environment; on the other, it can create a 'postcode lottery' in provision. To move back towards statutory provision of extended schools will require a framework of some sort. This should be designed after further research into what the core elements of a UK model of extended schools should be, but there need not be a contradiction between having a clear framework and allowing individual schools a degree of autonomy.

Extended schools as childcare. Our data analysis has shown that there is an untapped supply of labour among non-working parents, for whom improved childcare has the potential to make a substantial difference. In conjunction with action on making the labour market work better for parents, there is potential for extended schools to make a huge difference in tackling barriers around flexibility, availability, suitability and cost.

We set out a number of recommendations for the development of a renewed extended schools programme in three distinct areas: design, funding and future research.

Design

- The government should provide a basic guarantee of provision to all school-aged children, with minimum hours provided during term time (from 8am to 6pm) and with provision throughout the school holidays.

- Provision should be based on a universal model that includes all children, with a particular focus on ensuring disadvantaged children are included.

- A variation of different enrichment activities should be included in the provision, alongside the provision of food during before- and after-school activities and in school holidays.

- The extended schools model should be designed with the involvement of young people and parents, so that it is designed to meet their needs.

Funding

- Dedicated funding for extended schools should be made available by the government, and existing funding for breakfast clubs should be incorporated into this.

- The government should pilot different models of user-charging for extended schools, where charged-for services are unavoidable.

Future research

- A survey should be established to record the number and location of extended school services in the UK, and how they are managed and funded.

- Qualitative research should be conducted to identify the barriers to using extended schools, and to map which features of different models would complement parents' and children's needs.

- Local pilots of different approaches to extended schools should be carried out to identify best practice.

- An evaluation of international models should be conducted to draw lessons to inform policy and practice in the UK.

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ONE
INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

In recent years, we have seen a rise in charitable food provision to children – in the form of food banks and feeding initiatives, such as breakfast clubs and holiday clubs. This growing phenomenon has been evident both in political and media discourse and in emerging research into the scale and drivers of the problem.

Understandably, given it represents a number of largely spontaneous, ad hoc responses to a complex social problem, charitable food assistance presents a number of challenges. These projects are vulnerable (not least to the vagaries of funding), non-systematic – giving rise to 'postcode lotteries' for provision – and they treat the symptoms of child food insecurity rather than the root causes of household food and economic insecurity. As our previous research has concluded, there is a compelling logic to addressing these failings by focusing policy responses on universal provision and services, based on rights and entitlements, with the aim of promoting economic security and social justice.[1]

CPAG has previously written of the desirability of the extended schools model as an approach within a number of interconnected social policy agendas: childcare, enrichment activities for children, and food provision.[2] Extended schools appear to have much to recommend them as a response to food and economic insecurity: they can help to meet the immediate need for food provision while also helping with other financial pinch-points for families around finding affordable, enriching activities for children outside school hours; they take place in a trusted setting in which universal provision is seen as the norm; and they offer childcare in a regulated setting, giving parents greater scope to undertake paid work to help reduce the economic insecurity which underpins food insecurity.

We cannot ignore the context of high – and, according to respected independent forecasters, rapidly rising – child poverty. For we know not only that child poverty correlates closely with material hardship,[3] but also, from evidence from Canada where measurement of food insecurity is more mature, that we see a strong relationship at the household and individual level between food insecurity and poverty.[4] We know, too, that food banks play a greater role where child deprivation is high.[5]

THIS REPORT

This report is a collaboration between the University of Sheffield and Child Poverty Action Group. It builds on our respective understanding of the nature of the contemporary phenomena of food insecurity and recourse to charitable food provision among children in the UK, and of the potential for the extended schools approach to go well beyond the immediate issue of food provision to provide valuable resources to all children and their families. The purpose of this report is to explore in more detail the ways in which extended schools could form a more inclusive, upstream policy approach for meeting the needs of families. The report has several particular aims:

- To provide an up-to-date review of the current and historical policy context of extended schools and how this is, and has been, put into practice.

- To scope the academic evidence base that exists on extended school provision, with a particular focus on what lessons can be learned to inform future policy and practice.

- To use data from the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015 to explore how extended school provision might better serve the needs of parents with children aged five to 14. Looking particularly at: childcare as a barrier to work for these parents; holiday childcare provision and childcare opening hours; and perspectives on how provision can be improved.

- To make recommendations for future policy and practice.

EMERGENCY FOOD PROVISION TO CHILDREN IN THE UK

Emergency food provision to children takes a number of forms in the UK. Food bank use has been particularly prominent in media and political discourse, but we have also seen an increase in breakfast clubs, alongside holiday clubs and other projects designed to feed children. Various pieces of research into these phenomena support the intuitive – though not universal – conclusions that the increase reflects greater need, while separate evidence points to the extent of food insecurity in general.[6]

Between 2012/13 and 2013/14, provision by The Trussell Trust food banks rose by 252 per cent in absolute terms,[7] and has since grown by a further 69 per cent. In the most recent year, 2016/17, it handed out 436,938 food parcels to children.[8] Research into the pattern of use within The Trussell network suggests that households with children, and particularly large families and lone-parent families, are especially vulnerable to food bank use.[9]

The evidence suggests that provision of breakfast clubs is fairly widespread, and growing. A 2014 survey conducted by the Association for Public Service Excellence estimated that there had been a 45 per cent increase in breakfast club provision since 2008, with 85 per cent of schools currently having a breakfast club.[10] In general, however, the evidence base on breakfast clubs is patchy.[11] The ongoing and regular nature of provision, where it does exist, may be indicative of chronic need, although – a theme to which this report will continue to return – the need for breakfast clubs is not centred wholly around food, with morning childcare also a key concern for parents.

Holiday clubs and other provision to tackle holiday hunger is another area in which provision is patchy and evidence limited.[12] School holidays represent a pinch-point in family finances, when the extra costs of feeding children, of providing them with activities and of childcare, combine to put immense strain on budgets. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty estimates that as many as 428 holiday hunger initiatives may be in existence.[13] There has, however, been no central government funding of holiday hunger programmes, though local authorities have provided grants in the past,[14] and the Welsh government announced £500,000 of funding for projects in 2017.[15] Provision is fragmented and piecemeal, and varies greatly from location to location.

Looking to broader indicators of need, Unicef estimates, published in 2017 using 2014 and 2015 data, indicate significant levels of food insecurity in households with children: 19 per cent of UK children under the age of 15 live with a respondent who is moderately or severely food insecure, while 10.4 per cent – the highest proportion in Europe – live with someone who is severely food insecure.[16] If we consider food bank use as a destitution response, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimate of the extent of destitution in the UK is of interest. Of the 1,252,000 people it estimated to be destitute *and in touch with voluntary sector crisis services* (suggesting that this is a conservative estimate) in 2015, 312,000 were children.[17] And, as noted above, increasing child poverty – starting to rise and forecast to rise rapidly through the rest of the decade – can only add further to food insecurity, and to the need for policy responses to it.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty estimated that up to three million children in the UK risk being hungry in the school holidays. This group comprises over a million children growing up in poverty who receive free school meals during term time, as well as an estimated two million who are disqualified from free school meals because their parents work.[18] We know that parents tend to go without to protect their children, and this is borne out in a YouGov survey of low-income parents by Kellogg's in 2015, which found that one-third of parents have skipped a meal so their children can eat during the school holidays.[19]

FROM STATUTORY PROVISION TO CHARITY

The provision described above is of mixed provenance, its funding drawn from a range of sources – charity, corporate donation, some statutory funding – but what it has in common, and increasingly has in common with what the state provides, is that it is piecemeal and non-systematic. It is essentially a 'postcode lottery' as to what children receive.

What we have categorised as emergency food provision is, in reality, a set of responses to a set of distinct, if interlocking, issues. The acute income crises that may lead a family to seek out or be referred to emergency food provision is often embedded in a longer term, chronic food insecurity and chronic household poverty.[20] Food provision that may at times be characterised as responding to chronic need, such as breakfast clubs, may also provide vital support at times of acute crisis, when other resources are exhausted.

Each case, however, shares the common trajectory of a movement away from statutory, rights-based entitlement towards a patchwork of charitable provision. The University of Sheffield authors have previously identified that, based on available evidence, breakfast clubs and holiday hunger projects are susceptible to four of the challenges commonly presented by ad hoc food provision.[21] Specifically:

1. **Inaccessibility.** These projects are not always accessible. The published literature suggests that availability, capacity and opening hours can all vary, and that the cost of breakfast clubs can be a barrier for the poorest children.

2. **Unreliability.** The evidence reviewed also questions the reliability of breakfast and holiday hunger club provision where clubs do not run continuously over time.

3. **Unaccountability.** The accountability of breakfast and holiday hunger provision is also questionable, given that it is provided on a voluntary basis by communities and schools and not overseen nationally.

4. **Social unacceptability.** Urgent questions are also raised about the social acceptability of this provision to children. Particularly if they are targeted at 'hungry' young people, there are significant implications for children's experiences of social exclusion, embarrassment and stigma, all of which are acutely felt by children.

For low-income families, chronic poverty has been increased or exacerbated in a number of directions.[22] Austerity has been characterised by substantial cuts to social security support, particularly for families with children. The reduced generosity of the universal credit system compared with its original design will

see the poorest 10 per cent of families lose 10 per cent of their incomes, and put an extra million children in poverty, and an extra 900,000 children in severe poverty.[23] Households have experienced a decade-long squeeze in earnings,[24] while working and non-working households alike have been squeezed by a decision to allow benefit levels to fail to keep up with prices for several years running – coming hot on the heels of a spike in the price of the cost of essentials, such as food and energy.[25]

But it is in the realm of crisis support where the withdrawal of statutory provision has been most dramatically realised. The social security system has for a long time recognised that, with income-replacement benefits paid at subsistence levels, households reliant on them cannot be expected to build up the financial resources necessary to be resilient in the event of an unforeseen financial crisis. For around 25 years, the social fund fulfilled this function, through a mixture of grants and loans designed to help with exceptional circumstances or sudden costs, and 'alignment payments' in the event of unexpected benefit errors or delays – in effect, if the crisis in question was endogenous to the benefit system.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 localised the bulk of the social fund, in the form of local welfare assistance, gradually reducing, and then removing, dedicated funding for local authorities to perform this function. There is no requirement to monitor or evaluate the impact of local welfare assistance schemes, and so no comprehensive picture exists on their functions, criteria for access or generosity, let alone whether they are performing their intended role. Research within the voluntary sector has suggested that there is great variation in what schemes provide, with the majority offering only in-kind support, sometimes involving the issue of food bank vouchers, while a number of schemes have closed down entirely. Meanwhile, 'alignment payments' have been replaced by short-term benefit advances, or budgeting advances under universal credit. The limited data released by government suggests that far fewer people are applying for short-term benefit advances than applied for alignment payments – around an 80 per cent fall in the first year of their operation.[26] Taken as a whole, the removal of the social fund has previously been described by CPAG as constituting a withdrawal of the emergency 'safety net beneath the safety net'.[27]

Overall, we have clearly seen within the last decade a simultaneous rise in charitable food provision and both the withdrawal of statutory crisis support and the erosion of social security entitlements in general, and most particularly, their failure to keep pace with the cost of living. This shift in support from statutory to charity forms an important part of the context of the rise in emergency food provision to children, and informs this report's focus on extended schools. We are particularly interested in the potential of extended schools to provide a more comprehensive, inclusive systematic policy lever for meeting families' needs and enhancing family economic security.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS

As described above, extended schools have the potential to be the systematic type of provision to children and families that is needed to serve a variety of ends. But it is clear that they have some way to go to fulfil this. In September 2016, the CPAG and Family and Childcare Trust report *Unfinished Business* concluded that, while a majority of schools incorporate elements of the extended school model, 'the momentum for developing more comprehensive services appears to have faltered, due to funding constraints and the lack of a coherent government direction in the face of other policy priorities'. Significantly for our purposes, that research also concluded that 'extended provision across the UK appears to be fragmented'.[28]

In seeking to explore the potential of extended schools to meet the needs of children and families, this report will go on to look at what extended schools are, how they operate, and then consider how well matched they may be to the functions we might wish them to fulfil. Finally, we will explore whether it is possible to propose a model, structure or framework for extended schools policy in the future, and how governments and other players may go about implementing this.

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TWO
POLICY AND PROVISION OF EXTENDED SCHOOLS

We use the term 'extended schools' to refer to those schools which deliver a range of services beyond their core function of the classroom education of children within the normal school day.

Extended school provision can include health services, adult learning and community activities. In the context of this report, however, we are particularly interested in provision for children outside the basic school day, including breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and provision in school holidays. This wraparound provision for children serves a number of functions: it provides childcare that helps parents to find or to stay in work; sports, arts and other enrichment activities improve children's soft skills and motivation to learn; and extended schools often provide food, most often through breakfast clubs. Each of these functions can more broadly contribute to anti-poverty strategies, which is how extended schools are understood in a number of developed countries.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS IN THE UK: THE CONTEXT

Extended schools were rooted in the UK Labour government's 2003 Every Child Matters programme, which also included a national network of Sure Start children's centres. Our definition stems from that period, though the vision for an extended schools programme for England was articulated a few years earlier, in a 1999 report published as part of the government's neighbourhood renewal strategy.[1] This envisaged schools providing a range of additional services:[2]

• targeted school-located support services for children – for example, counselling, obesity management and speech therapy;

• homework clubs and additional classes targeted at disadvantaged children;

- sporting and cultural enrichment activities for children – for example, school music ensembles, drama clubs and gardening clubs;

- before- and after-school childcare and holiday play provision for working parents;

- support services for parents – for example, parenting classes, home learning workshops, employment training, and job search and ESOL classes;

- activities targeted at the wider community – for example, art and design courses using the school facilities.

The 2004 five-year strategy for children and learners committed schools to offering wraparound childcare, available from 8am to 6pm, for 48 weeks of the year, paid for by tax credits. To this end, at least one 'full service' extended school was to be developed in each local authority by 2006, focused mainly on areas of disadvantage. By 2008, at least 1,000 primary schools were to offer 8am to 6pm wraparound childcare. A stated aspiration was that, over time (later clarified to by 2010), every primary and secondary school would become an extended school, offering a wide range of study support activities.[3] An evaluation commissioned for the Department for Education and Skills of the first three years of full service extended schools found significant positive impacts on attainment, and a narrowing of the free school meals attainment gap.[4]

In 2005, the Department for Education and Skills produced a prospectus for extended schools, which made a commitment that, by 2010, all children should have access to a variety of activities beyond the school day, and undertook to spend £680 million by 2008, primarily in the form of start-up funding, to add to £160 million already spent. For the most part, costs would be met through user charges, offset in some cases and for some parents by financial support available through the childcare element of working tax credit. As such, and as part of the wider Every Child Matters agenda, funding and targeting fell broadly into the progressive universalist approach of a basic minimum buttressed by heightened means-tested support for an eligible group, generally defined by low income.

The definition of extended schools distinguished between full service extended schools and other schools which were to allow children and families 'to access a core of extended services which are developed in partnership with others'. This did not necessarily need to happen on site for primary schools, but secondary schools were expected to be 'open from 8am to 6pm all year round, offering a range of activities for young people'.

The core of extended schools involved wraparound childcare, available from 8am to 6pm all year round; a varied menu of activities, including homework clubs and study support, sport, music, tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs, visits to museums and galleries, learning a foreign language,

volunteering, and business and enterprise activities; parenting support; referral to a wide range of specialist support services; and wider community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities, and adult learning.[5]

The vision faltered, however, and, in 2011, the ring-fenced funding for extended schools in England ended. CPAG and the Family and Childcare Trust's 2016 report *Unfinished Business* shows how this funding shortfall has affected extended schools' ability to achieve their aims. The research uncovered a mismatch between demand and the ability of schools to meet it. Notably, almost two-fifths (39 per cent) of schools surveyed for the report said parents wanted holiday provision, but only 29 per cent of schools were able to offer it. For after-school childcare, provided by just over half of schools, the shortfall was 11 per cent, and was particularly acute in primary schools.

In general, this research found that schools feel that they are restricted in what they can provide because of limited funding, despite an apparently unanimous desire to expand extended services further. Schools had positive assessments on the outcomes of extended schools, which chimes with the findings of government-funded evaluations. A mismatch has thus developed between the policy intention – to have an extended school system benefiting all, and lower income groups especially – and the reality, seemingly driven by a shortfall in funding to meet the universal element of the aspiration.

Funding of breakfast clubs, meanwhile, now comes from a variety of sources: across the UK, 55 per cent of breakfast clubs are self-supporting, with 26 per cent supported by the school budget, 9.4 per cent funded by a charity or sponsor company, and 5.7 per cent by local or national government schemes. In Wales, meanwhile, 71 per cent of school breakfast clubs are government funded, and 23 per cent local government funded,[6] reflecting the fact that the Welsh government has funded provision since 2004.[7] The Department of Health funded a pilot programme for breakfast clubs in 1999,[8] while the coalition government committed funding as part of the Child Poverty Strategy,[9] and the same government also pledged to use the UK's share of the deprived persons funds (amounting to £3.15 million in 2013/14),[10] and the £10 million from the sugary drinks levy to fund breakfast club provision.[11] In 2016, a 'right to request' extended schools was introduced for parents and providers, and £285 million a year was committed to support 25 per cent of secondary schools to extend the school day in Budget 2016.[12] Most recently, in March 2018, £26 million funding was announced to boost breakfast club provision through two charities in targeted 'opportunity areas'.[13] There is little data to show the take-up or impact of the 'right to request' so far.

Breakfast clubs have epitomised the movement from statutory to charity provision described earlier. In the years of the New Labour governments (1997 to 2010), breakfast club provision was situated within the extended schools agenda and other policy programmes aimed at tackling health and social inequalities and social exclusion. Since 2010, breakfast club funding has increasingly occurred in

a silo, divorced from the broader extended schools offer, and based on individualised interpretations of poverty, and with limited ambitions of poverty alleviation rather than reduction or prevention.[14]

EXTENDED SCHOOLS AND CHILDCARE POLICY

The UK government was clear from the outset that extended schools were an important part of its childcare strategy, linking its 2005 extended schools prospectus with the previous year's 10-year strategy for childcare. Year-round, wraparound childcare, accessed through or at primary schools and at secondary schools formed the core of this offer. Schools were expected to deliver this either directly, working with a third-party provider from the private or voluntary sector, or working in clusters with other local schools. Childcare delivered through extended schools was seen as fulfilling the multiple roles of helping children's development, allowing them to rest and to enjoy play, and enabling parents to return to work.[15]

Schools were also expected to play an important co-ordinating role: alongside children's centres, extended schools were expected to form a vital and consolidated source of information, both for local authorities in the form of market information, and from the perspective of parents, as, in many cases, the single access point to a range of services.[16]

Notwithstanding the limited start-up funding for extended schools and grants for breakfast club provision, childcare delivered through extended schools is subject to the same funding and charging model as other childcare in the UK. That is to say, the presumption is of costs being recovered through user charges, with a patchwork of government support available to parents to help meet those costs.

The support available to parents to meet childcare costs is in three broad categories: free provision, tax relief schemes and support through the social security system.[17] Free provision applies to pre-school children: England, Scotland and Wales all have universal free entitlement to early education and childcare for three- and four-year-olds. In England, this rose from 15 hours a week to 30 hours a week for most working parents in September 2017. Scotland offers 600 hours a year, equivalent to 12.5 hours a week over 48 weeks. Wales offers 10 hours a week for 38 weeks a year, with more in some local authorities. Similar support is available for two-year-olds, but with restrictions to entitlement based on income or locality.

Tax-free childcare is being rolled out from April 2017 to replace employer-provided childcare vouchers over time. The two are broadly similar schemes, the main differences being that the new scheme is also available to self-employed parents and that, where childcare vouchers are only delivered through employers who choose to take part, tax-free childcare is available to all who meet its criteria. Tax-free childcare offers up to £2,000 a year per child for parents not receiving

universal credit or tax credits, provided parents earn no more than £100,000 a year. Childcare vouchers meet up to £55 of childcare costs per parent per week.

Support through the social security system is more generous, but means tested, and, in effect, limited to two children. It also depends on provision being formally registered (and some extended school services are not). Universal credit now funds 85 per cent of childcare costs, up to a ceiling of £175 a week for one child or £300 a week for two or more children. This is gradually replacing support through working tax credit, which funds up to 70 per cent of childcare costs – with the same ceilings as under universal credit – and disregards in housing benefit. The major limitation to this support is the weekly cap on payments, which has remained unchanged since 2005. CPAG's *The Cost of a Child in 2014* found that the cost of childcare outside London had risen by 60 per cent since then, and that average fees for someone working full time were only just below the limit. As costs are highly variable, the limit will be exceeded in many cases. Figure 2.1 demonstrates both this effect and how consistent and substantial has been the inflation in childcare costs over recent years.

Tax-free childcare, childcare vouchers and support through tax credits and universal credit are all potential sources through which parents can reclaim some of the cost of extended school childcare provision. Ultimately, though, the primary source of funding for this comes from charges to parents (though *Unfinished Business* found that 75 per cent of schools used some pupil premium funding, and half used some core funding[18]), with all the impacts on family resources that this implies.

Figure 2.1
Childcare costs and the eligible working tax credit limit, 2005 to 2018
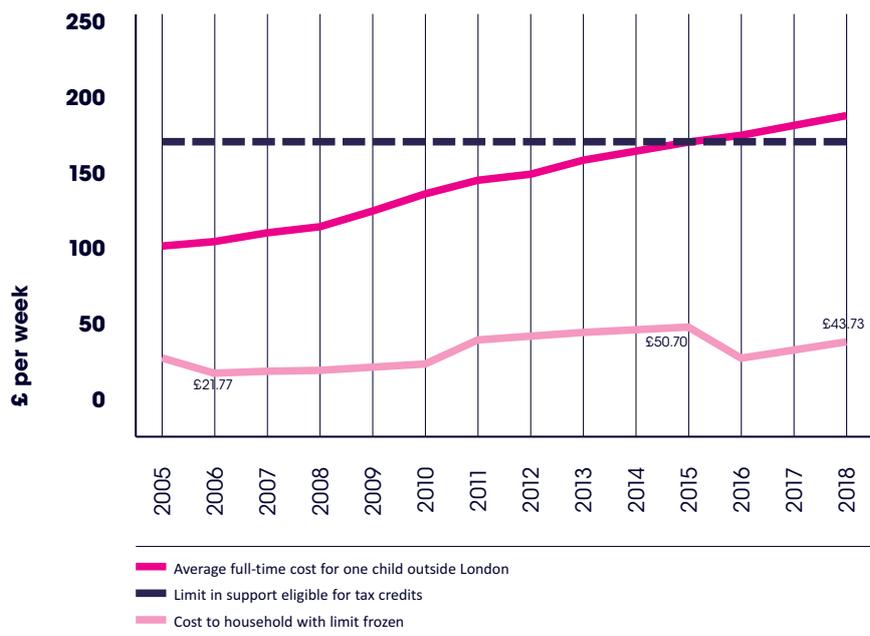
Source: D Hirsch, *The Cost of a Child in 2014*, CPAG, 2014

EXTENDED SCHOOLS AND DEPRIVATION

One of the major advantages of extended schools is that they allow childcare and enrichment activities to take place in a trusted setting and, as the 2005 prospectus noted, 'opening up schools to provide services and activities also means that parents can access childcare without worrying about children moving between school and childcare facilities'.[19] With evidence that low-income parents are less likely to make use of formal childcare,[20] increased use of extended schools has the potential to increase take-up among under-represented groups – though the extent to which this is true will depend on the relative extent to which mistrust plays a role in this, against cost.

Certainly, data from the Department for Education's Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015 suggests that cost of childcare is more of a barrier to work for low-income families, but also that the differentials with middle-income households are not enormous (see Section 4). The survey also backs up previous findings that childcare costs put people off using childcare, evident in the reasons given by those using informal childcare. Even where families do make use of childcare to undertake paid work, its costs can lead to detrimental effects: the poverty risk for children in families paying for childcare increases by a third once childcare costs are taken into account.[21]

There clearly remain challenges to realising the full potential of extended schools as a mode of childcare. *Unfinished Business* found an unmet demand for both term-time and holiday childcare within schools, while also identifying a divide in interest towards after-school activities between more advantaged and disadvantaged groups. This echoes Department for Education findings that 'the costs of activities are still a barrier to pupils taking part, particularly pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds'.[22] Boosting supply in general – with funding pressures clearly significant – and boosting demand from disadvantaged groups – whom the evidence suggests benefit disproportionately – seem to be appropriate aspirations for extended schools policy.

When considering how to ensure that extended schools help the disadvantaged children who potentially stand to gain most from them, the question should be asked: how best to target these groups? The case of the current childcare offer for disadvantaged two-year-olds is instructive. According to a 2016 report by the Family and Childcare Trust, half of these children do not receive their free entitlement to childcare in a setting led by an early years graduate. The report goes on to conclude that the evidence suggests that a high level of universalism is needed to ensure that those children with the greatest needs can be supported, in a non-stigmatising environment.[23]

Part of the purpose of extended schools in the UK has been to offer enrichment activities for children, and particularly those whose parents may not otherwise be able to provide them. Yet this aspiration has not been clearly built into the

design or funding arrangements of extended schools so far. Instead, they have been left reliant on a patchwork of means-tested, demand-side support intended for childcare (but only available to certain working parents), pupil premium funding and core school funding, along with limited funding for breakfast clubs. Working out the extent to which they are intended to deal with deprivation, what this means in terms of targeting or universal provision, and how the funding arrangements will support this are all crucial questions for extended schools in the future.

INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF EXTENDED SCHOOLS

In UK policy, extended schools have, to date, been defined largely by the types of services and activities they offer, rather than by a particular structure or model of delivery. Dedicated funding has been replaced by individual decisions taken at the school level, with extended schools paid for through a mixture of pupil premium funding, general school budgets and user charges, for which parents may be able to receive support through tax credits and universal credit, or childcare vouchers and tax-free childcare.

This approach of having no prescribed model has the advantage of maximising flexibility, according to local needs, the make-up of the school population, and assorted other characteristics of schools and the areas they serve. It also allows schools to vary the offer according to the age of children. For example, younger children may need a more structured environment, whereas, for older children, simply having a safe place to be may be of the greatest value. While there is clearly unmet need for school-aged childcare, it may be that this is as much about resourcing as it is about this flexible approach per se.

That supposition is reinforced when looking at the approaches followed in other countries, which share apparent similarities with the UK approach. In Sweden, municipalities are obliged to offer out-of-school centres for children aged six to 13 where their parents are studying or working. These facilities are located in or near the school, and municipalities are entitled to charge a 'reasonable fee', with a maximum fee policy in place. Crucially, these facilities are open all year round.

Danish schools all have an affiliated after-school centre, typically open from 7am to 8am and from 11am to 5pm (Danish office hours are typically 8am–4pm). After-school centres offer a wide variety of activities, ranging from creative self-expression such as music, theatre, painting, sewing or drawing to more sporting activities such as swimming, football or skating. They have more of a focus on play and less on direct education than do UK extended schools, and tend to have more qualified staff and more of a recognised career path as a play worker. This contrasts with a risk in the UK that less play and more work means that an after-school club is seen as 'more school'.[24] Places are charged on a sliding scale of fees, including cost-free places, depending on household income.

Full-service schooling in the US is based on an approach that incorporates both pupils and the wider community in which the school is situated. There is a lack of data on how many full service community schools exist in the country, while the breadth of extended provision varies from school to school. Funding is piecemeal, with schools relying on a range of sources, including competitive grants from central government. Perhaps more so than in the UK, it is difficult to identify 'a model' of extended schools in the US.

When thinking about what model of extended schools is most appropriate for the UK, there is a need to balance the tension between retaining the flexibility of schools to respond to their local needs and environment, and ensuring that all children and families benefit from an equivalent level of provision. Within that, there is a particular challenge to ensure that children from poorer families – who stand to benefit the most – are well served and able to take advantage of the provision that is on offer.

THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF EXTENDED SCHOOL PROVISION IN THE UK

The Department for Education's Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey (2013) offers an important insight into the scale and nature of wraparound childcare provision in the UK.[25]

Provision and attendance

The survey identified total numbers of settings and places within the UK in 2013:

- 13,400 after-school settings offered a total of 612,400 places;

- 12,800 before-school settings offered a total number of 469,200 places;

- 7,200 holiday settings offered a total number of 341,400 places.

According to this survey, older children make up a substantial proportion of overall attendance in before-school and after-school settings. Children aged eight to 10 accounted for 37 per cent of attendance at after-school settings and 32 per cent in before-school settings.

Six in 10 holiday providers were privately run in 2013, compared to three in 10 before-school providers (32 per cent) and four in 10 after-school settings (41 per cent). Over half (52 per cent) of before-school providers and four in 10 after-school providers (40 per cent) were run by a school or college. Around half of all before-school and after-school places were in maintained settings (53 per cent and 51 per cent respectively).

Figure 2.2
Number of out-of-school providers
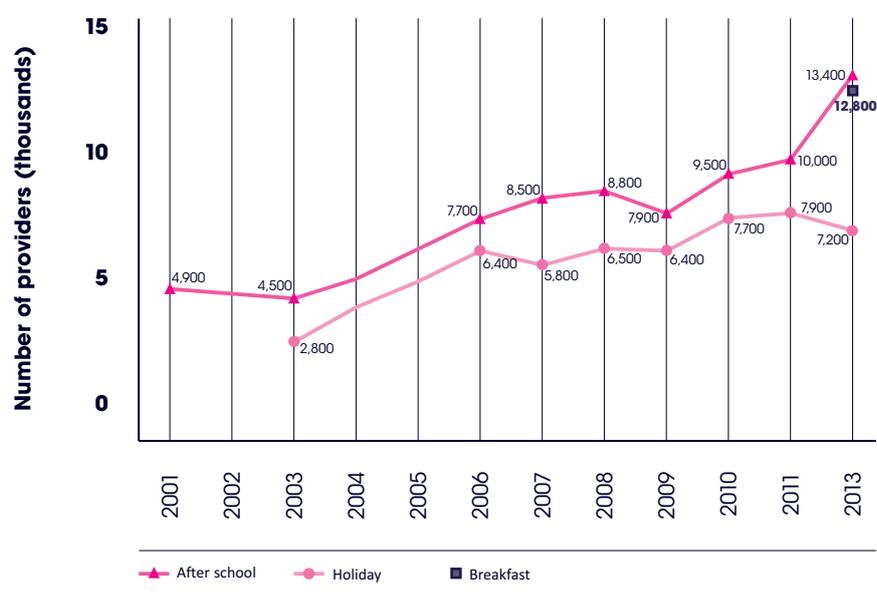
Geographical distribution

Twenty-seven per cent of all holiday providers, 26 per cent of after-school providers and 33 per cent of before-school providers were located in the 30 per cent most deprived areas. In terms of regional distribution:

- There is now a higher proportion of after-school settings in the South East (16 per cent, compared to 12 per cent in 2011) and a lower proportion of after-school settings in the North West (14 per cent, compared to 18 per cent in 2011).

- The greatest share of before-school places was found in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside and in the North West (18 per cent in each), despite each of these regions only accounting for 14 per cent and 13 per cent of the population of five- to 11-year-olds respectively.

- Changes in the regional distribution of holiday provision were minimal. In contrast, the regional distribution of after-school and holiday club places were essentially in line with the population of children aged five to 11 in each region.

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THREE
REPORTED OUTCOMES IN THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

There is a very limited peer-reviewed evidence base relating to extended schools. Searches identified seven applicable and relevant publications – published between 2006 and 2013.

These papers all focus on the capacity of extended schools to have an impact on disadvantage and educational attainment.[1] Many refer to previous evaluations of extended school provision in order to assess this impact dating from 1999 to 2011, and one source in particular contains its own evaluation of the impact of extended schools.[2] It is important to note that further evaluations of extended school provision have been conducted which are not cited in this literature.[3]

LITERATURE EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF EXTENDED SCHOOLS

Research findings relating to extended schools' impact on disadvantage and educational attainment highlight three key challenges: a lack of evaluative evidence robustly demonstrating the impact of extended schools on disadvantage and educational attainment; the lack of guidance that was provided to schools on the delivery of extended schools; and the limited reach that the strategies employed within the extended schools initiative has to effect structural change, when not more explicitly connected to wider poverty, deprivation and social exclusion strategies.

Lack of evaluation

As of the mid-2000s, despite the continued emphasis on extended schools' ability to tackle disadvantage through education, this research highlighted that the evidence base at this point was not strong.[4] By this time, evaluators had not yet

been able to find evidence of the sorts of 'major transformations' in social conditions and educational achievements that the policy set out to achieve.[5] At the same time, it was recognised that a number of factors made evaluating this type of provision as a whole difficult, notably the 'multi-strand nature of extended school activities, the complex contexts in which they operate (often characterised by the presence of many other related initiatives) and the typically short time-span of educational evaluations'.[6]

However, beyond the evaluations discussed in the peer-reviewed literature, others have been conducted. These evaluations did find outcomes related to improved educational achievement and attainment, reporting specifically a positive impact on children's marks and exam results.[7] Outcomes distinctly related to disadvantage were absent, and it was identified that extended schools had, overall, struggled to engage with disadvantaged families.[8] Outcomes related to parental engagement were mixed, with one evaluation identifying a positive impact due to involvement in activities,[9] and another noting an overall limited uptake in engagement.[10] The behaviour of pupils was identified as having improved overall in both evaluations.

The most recent findings are from a report by University College London and a briefing paper by NatCen and Newcastle University, which concur with these previous evaluations regarding improved educational achievement. The researchers found significantly higher scores at key stage one and key stage two for disadvantaged children attending extended school activities compared with those who do not attend,[11] and higher scores if they attend more sessions.[12]

Lack of government guidance on delivery

Research has also highlighted problems related to the lack of guidance from government on the format of the delivery of extended schools.[13] Simon argues that the lack of guidance, coupled with the managerial freedoms devolved to schools since the late 1980s, has led to schools engaging in the extended schools agenda on a short-term, 'proximal' basis, concentrating on educational improvements and targets, rather than making connections to wider social and community reforms.[14]

By determining that each extended school will be different in form depending on the particular school in which it operates, the government guidance shied away from any specificity, and did not address the fundamental questions related to needs, or discuss which interventions are likely to be effective.[15] As a result, extended school delivery depended on how it was understood by education professionals and their partners in other agencies, who had to make it work in practice (head teachers, local authority officers, community workers, social workers, health personnel and others).[16] Further research also reveals a lack of awareness of the purpose and aims of the extended school initiative within schools, particularly below senior staff level.[17] Where future policymakers may

seek to rectify this, Mortlock has argued that incorporating the voices of children in the formulation of guidance will be of particular importance, to ensure the provision is fit for purpose.[18]

Impact on structural drivers of disadvantage and educational inequality

Several papers have dealt with the ability of the extended schools policy to address the structural determinants of disadvantage and educational inequality.[19] Raffo and Dyson argue that the policy agenda did not focus enough on the impact extended schools could have on broader structural determinants, such as drivers of geographical concentrations of disadvantage, favouring instead other 'proximal' indicators like employability.[20]

While evidence around individual-level impacts (for example, adults engaging in courses and support services) were identified by research, at the same time it was argued that such small-scale impact is unlikely to overcome broader systemic drivers of local unemployment and poverty levels for which economic, rather than just educational, interventions would be required.[21] Raffo and others argue that evidence showing limited impacts of extended schools on educational outcomes was a result of not connecting these interventions to wider experiences of social exclusion.[22]

IMPLICATIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The academic evidence base is extremely limited, but what this body of work does highlight is that lessons learned from the earlier stages of extended schools policy point to the importance of more evaluative evidence on the impacts of this intervention, the need to ensure that the extended schools agenda is part of a broader, more holistic approach to the structural determinants of deprivation and educational inequality, and for more clear and coherent guidance from government on how best to deliver these programmes.

Notes

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FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, we examine the role extended schools can play in childcare. It is based on analysis of the Department for Education's Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015.[1]

The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015 comprises interviews with 6,198 parents in England with children under the age of 15. The purpose of the survey was to provide up-to-date information on parents' use of childcare and early years provision, their views and experiences, and to help monitor the progress of policies and public attitudes.

The interviews took place between October 2014 and July 2015. They were conducted face to face in parents' homes and the main respondent to the survey was always a parent or guardian with responsibility for childcare decisions. The data covers the childcare used by different types of families, changes in uptake over the years, parents' reasons for using, or not using, childcare and for choosing particular providers, and parents' views on the providers they used and on childcare provision in their local area in general.

The software package SPSS IBM version 23 was used to explore and summarise the raw data and provide a range of descriptive statistics. Only data relating to parents with children of school age (four to 15) was explored, so that the findings could be directly related to extended school provision.

We divide our analysis into four sections. First, we look at work and childcare, considering the ways in which childcare for school-aged children interacts with working patterns and the decisions families take in that regard, including looking specifically at holiday childcare. Second, we look more particularly at how families experience childcare in terms of affordability. Third, we look at parents' responses to questions on how childcare might be improved. Finally, we look at those parents who use informal childcare, and explore the reasons for this.

WORK AND CHILDCARE

CPAG has previously written about the decisions parents make on how many hours to work, and how this is influenced by family finances, caring responsibilities, the labour market, and the availability of formal or informal childcare.[2] This provided the opportunity for further empirical analysis specifically around the links between childcare provision and working patterns. It is clear that the circumstances faced by families vary enormously and, while there is consensus that work is an important part of the mix in most circumstances, it is impossible to specify an ideal balance to which all families should aspire.

Ultimately, the appropriate balance between work and time with children is something that is personal to individual parents, and which may be struck differently for different families, according to their needs, preferences and circumstances. Policy should strive to ensure that each family is empowered to make the choices around the hours they work in a way that best balances their financial needs and parental time with children. Here, we explore the ways in which the childcare landscape influences the extent to which parents are able to exercise the best possible choices for themselves and their families.

Childcare as a barrier to work

Childcare is clearly perceived as a major barrier among those parents of school-aged children who are not working. Overall, two-thirds (65 per cent) of respondents said that they would work if they could arrange good-quality childcare that was convenient, reliable and affordable. This suggests that a high proportion of parents are unable to make a positive decision to work to the extent that they would wish, as a result of inadequate childcare. Perhaps surprisingly, this remains true even for almost half (47.9 per cent) of households earning £45,000 or more a year.

In general, there is an income gradient associated with childcare acting as a barrier to work, with three-quarters (76.2 per cent) of the lowest earning households agreeing that they would work if there was appropriate childcare, falling to around two-thirds for the remaining income bands. Interestingly, levels of agreement rose between the £20,000–£29,999 and £30,000–£44,999 income bands, and strong agreement was highest among the latter. This may reflect the fact that childcare support through the social security system is likely to be withdrawn in the higher of these income bands.

On the flip side, we may see strong disagreement as suggesting that non-workers are more likely to be making a clear, positive decision not to work. This response is highest among the highest income band – though this still represents under a quarter (23 per cent) of respondents – followed by just under one-fifth (18.5 per cent) of the middle band (£20,000–£29,999). Though the latter rate is only slightly

Figure 4.1
If I could arrange good-quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable, I would prefer to go out to work (for respondents not in work)

Household income (£)

Agree strongly   Agree   Disagree   Disagree strongly
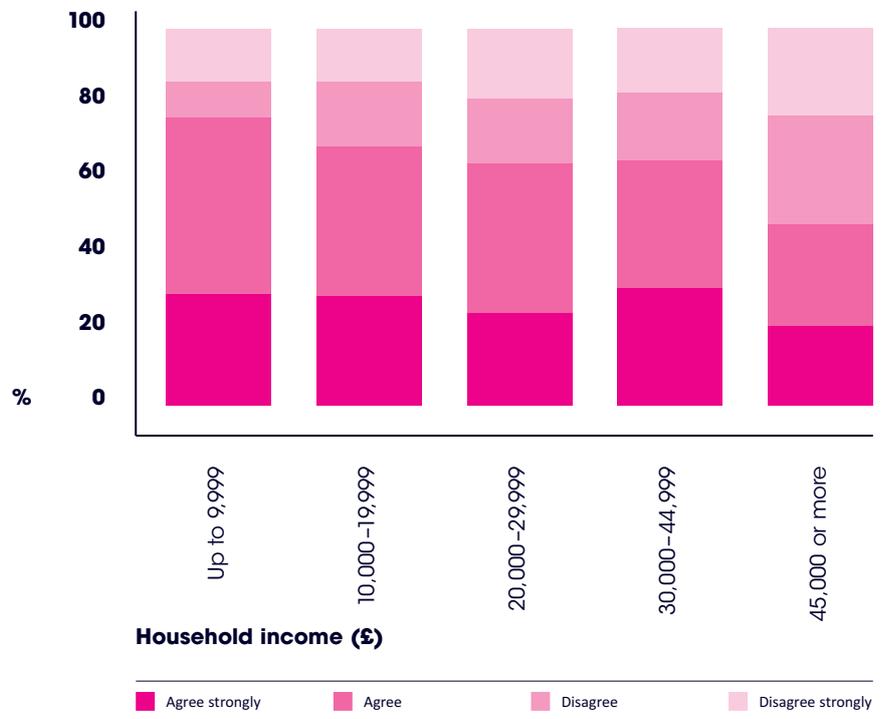
higher than in the next income band (£30,000–£44,999; 16.9 per cent), this is consistent with the suggestion that withdrawal of financial support for childcare may have some impact on decision making among the upper-middle income band.

Childcare alongside other reasons for not working

Among those respondents who do not work (see Figure 4.2), less than one-fifth (17.9 per cent) explicitly gave childcare as their main reason, providing one of six childcare-related responses, linked to availability, affordability and quality.[3] Slightly over half said either that they wanted to stay with their children (36.2 per cent) or that their children were too young (14 per cent),[4] which we might construe as positive reasons for not working. The remaining responses, accounting for between one-quarter and one-third of the total, are more ambiguous – notably, a child or children having a long-term disability or illness (15.6 per cent), or 'my children would suffer if I went out to work' (9.7 per cent), as well as 'other reasons' (given by 6.4 per cent). In these cases, it is possible that the availability of more appropriate (and perhaps more affordable) childcare might change the framework within which those parents are deciding whether or not to work. Indeed, even where the reasons for not working are positive, those positive decisions are nonetheless being made in the context of the current

childcare environment, which must, to an extent, frame the choices made. At the very least, we can say that there is a significant minority for whom childcare is a clear and explicit barrier to employment, but also that there are many more parents currently not in paid employment who may, or may not, wish to work in the presence of a different childcare ecosystem. This interpretation is bolstered by the high proportion (see Figure 4.1) who said they would work in the presence of good-quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare.

The proportion of parents citing childcare issues as a reason for not working (see Table 4.1) is fairly steady among income groups, with the exception of the £30,000–£44,999 and the £45,000 and above income groups. For the £30,000–£44,999 band, 31 per cent, compared with 22.5 per cent on average, gave such a response, while for the £45,000 and above band, this falls to 14.5 per cent. This is striking, as the income range of the first group roughly corresponds with when support for childcare through the social security system will tend to be withdrawn, while the higher income band is likely to contain a higher proportion of families with high enough earnings to meet the costs of childcare relatively comfortably (which could also be seen as a reflection on how expensive childcare is for lower income families). This perhaps suggests that affordable childcare can have a positive role in facilitating positive choices for families between the balance of work and parental time with children, rather than financially-driven ones.

Figure 4.2
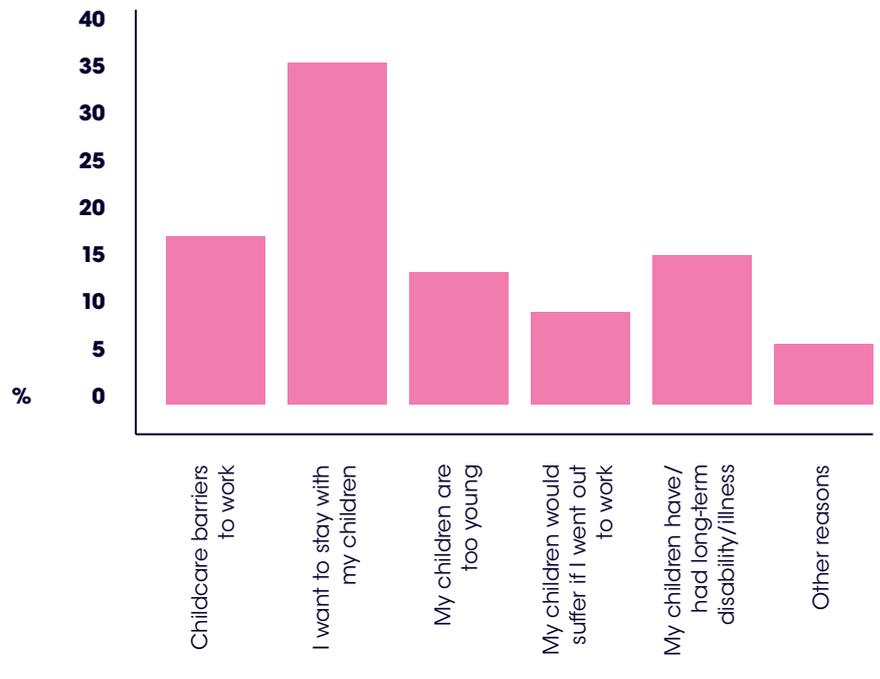Reason respondent does not work[5]

Table 4.1
Reason for not working: childcare issues, by gross annual income[6]

Income	No	Yes	Total
Up to £9,999	103 75.7%	33 24.3%	136
£10,000–£19,999	352 77.9%	100 22.1%	452
£20,000–£29,999	219 77.4%	64 22.6%	283
£30,000–£39,999	100 69.0%	45 31.0%	145
£45,000 or more	148 85.0%	25 14.5%	173
Total	922 77.5%	267 22.5%	1,189

Holiday childcare

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 consider the impact of the availability and affordability of holiday childcare on the desire to increase working hours. While these issues are, unsurprisingly, of greater importance to those working part time (who have more scope to increase their working hours), there are still a number of frustrated full-timers, who would work more hours in the presence of more, or more affordable, holiday childcare provision.

While both availability and affordability are cited by a significant minority of part-time workers in particular as a barrier to increasing working hours, affordability is the greater issue. Nearly two-fifths (38.3 per cent) of part-time workers would work more hours if holiday care was more affordable, while 30.2 per cent would increase their working hours if holiday care was available for more hours per day. (It is unclear, though, how these interact: one would imagine that if the increased availability was also of more affordable holiday care, this would have a greater impact than either increased availability at current prices or increased affordability at current availability alone.)

Meanwhile, one-fifth (20.5 per cent) of full-time workers agree that they would increase their working hours if holiday care was more affordable, slightly more than the 16.6 per cent who would increase their working hours if holiday care was available for more hours per day. There does not seem to be a great difference in the strength of feeling, with similar proportions among both groups who agree doing so strongly.

Figure 4.3
If holiday care was more affordable, I would increase my working hours[7]
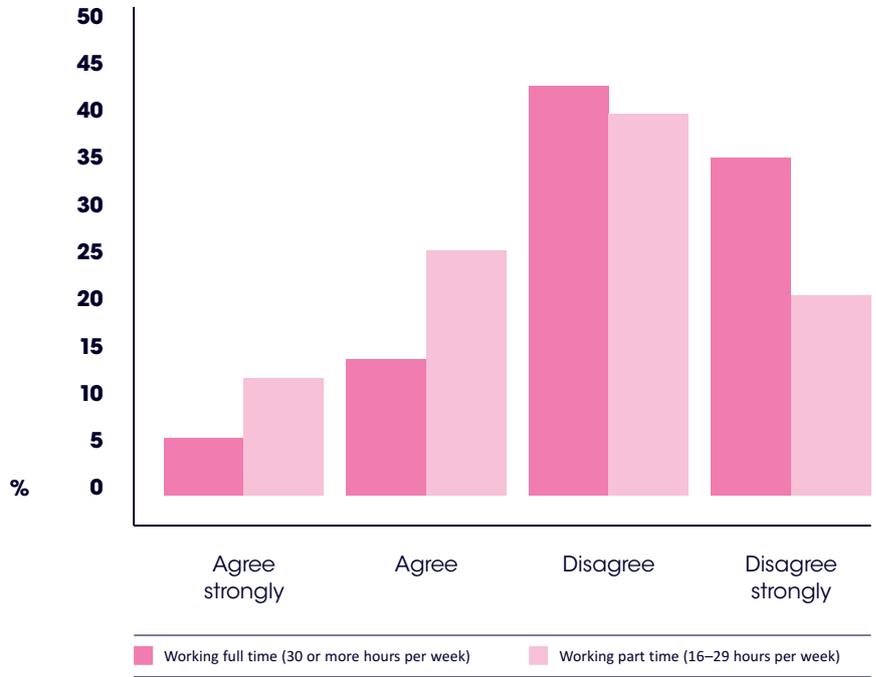

Working full time (30 or more hours per week)   Working part time (16–29 hours per week)

Figure 4.4
If holiday care was available for more hours per day, I would increase my working hours[8]

Working full time (30 or more hours per week), including self-employment
Working part time (16–29 hours per week), including self-employment
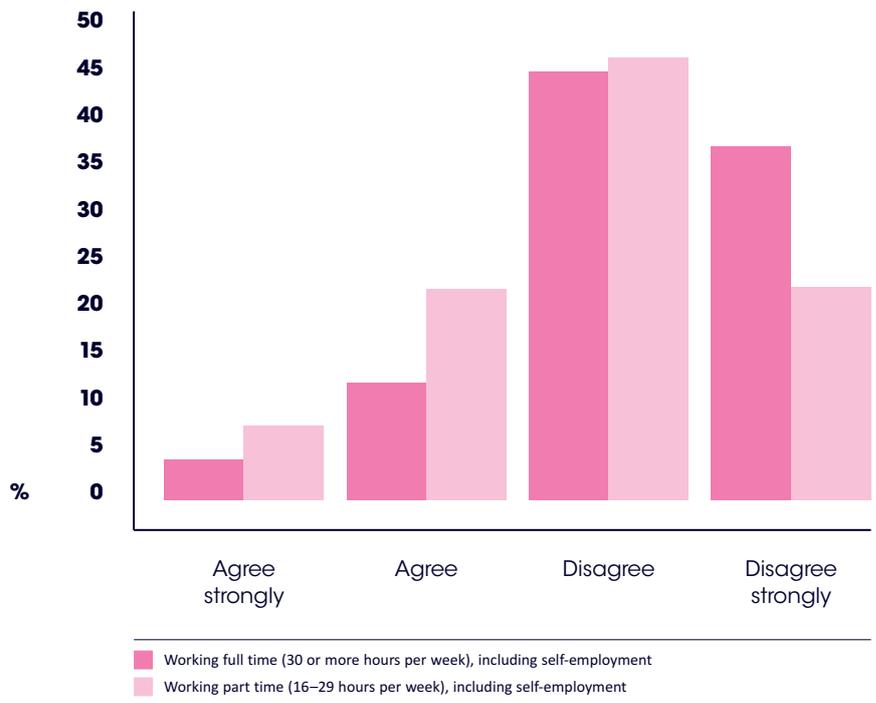
The definitions of 'full time' and 'part time' used here are relatively conservative, at 30 or more hours per week and 16–29 hours per week respectively, which could go some way to explaining why around half as many full-time as part-time workers say they would work longer hours in the presence of more affordable or more available holiday care. Overall, it is clear that inadequate holiday childcare is a major issue in limiting parents' working hours, suggesting in turn that a substantial minority of families are being prevented from achieving their preferred work-caring balance, with likely knock-on effects for household earnings and for family poverty.

AFFORDABILITY

Here, we look at the question of the affordability of childcare – both generally, and in school holidays in particular. We consider the issue for both working and non-working parents, in order to get a sense of how affordability is perceived in general, in addition to its being a particular barrier to work.

Difficulty finding affordable holiday childcare

Figure 4.5 and Table 4.2 show the views of all the respondents – working and non-working – on childcare affordability. Perhaps surprisingly, among those who express a view on whether they have difficulty finding affordable childcare during the school holidays (see Figure 4.5), the proportion agreeing does not vary greatly among income groups, save for those in the highest income band (£45,000 or more), who report less of a problem. Difficulty peaks in the £20,000–£29,999 group at 46.2 per cent, falling to 31.9 per cent in the highest income band. It is possible that some of the lack of variability is due to the combination element of the question, in which lack of availability could also be an issue. The lower income bands are also likely to have lower work intensity, which could mean that they are less likely to be looking for childcare – though, as we have seen above, many of those will not be working because of expensive childcare. Meanwhile, eligibility for childcare support through the social security system is higher in lower income groups, offsetting higher childcare costs as a proportion of income.

Overall, the key finding on holiday care is that, for all but the highest earning income group, around half agree or strongly agree that they have difficulty finding childcare they can afford during the school holidays. Especially given the fact that a proportion of those not reporting difficultly are not currently seeking childcare, this suggests there is a substantial shortfall in affordable holiday care – and one which cuts across all income groups. Even among high-earning households, a substantial minority face difficulties.

Figure 4.5
I have difficulty finding childcare that I can afford during the school holidays
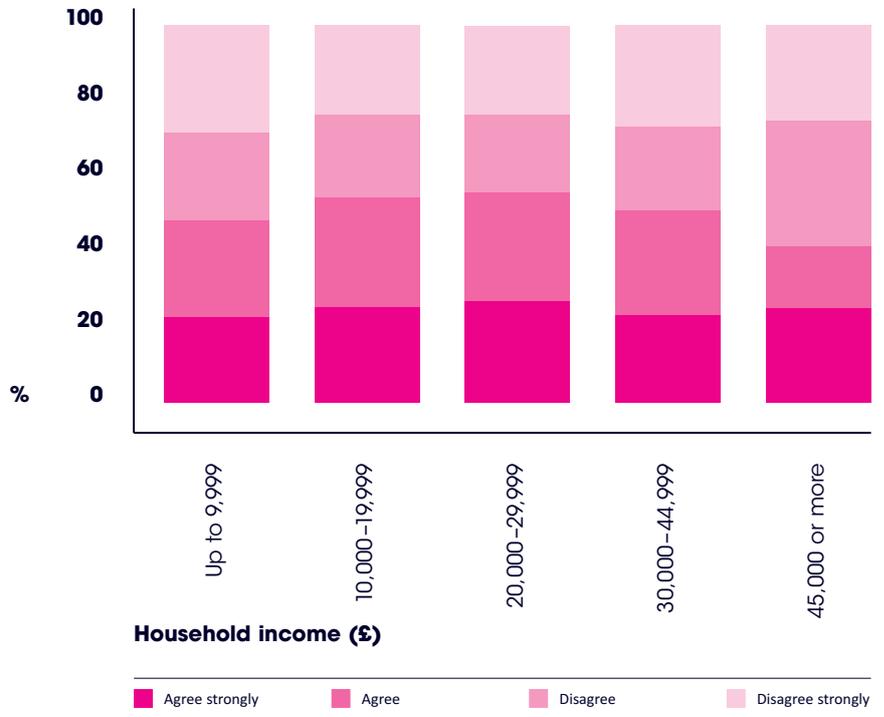
Affordability of all childcare

Looking at affordability more generally, respondents were fairly split in their views on the affordability of childcare in their local area, for a family like theirs. Among those expressing a view, 52.4 per cent described local affordability as 'very good' or 'fairly good', while 47.7 per cent described it as 'fairly poor' or 'very poor'. Perhaps significantly, one-fifth (20.6 per cent) described affordability as 'very poor' – twice as many as described it as 'very good' – suggesting a substantial proportion face severe affordability issues. This proportion is similar to the proportion of parents who cite childcare-related reasons for not working (see above). Perhaps significantly, 29 per cent of those responding spontaneously said they were unsure about affordability in their local area, which chimes with findings elsewhere that a lack of information about childcare availability is an issue for many parents.

Table 4.2

Table 4.2
Affordability of childcare in local area, whether respondent using childcare or not (excluding 'not sure')

	Number	%
Very good	276	10.3
Fairly good	1,129	42.1
Fairly poor	727	27.1
Very poor	552	20.6
Total	2,684	100.0

Among those using childcare, however, a majority (56.9 per cent) find it 'very easy' or 'easy' to meet the childcare costs they face (see Table 4.3), whereas just under one-fifth (18.8 per cent) find it 'difficult' or 'very difficult'. The gap between this finding and those on affordability in the local area perhaps suggests that a significant proportion of respondents are put off using childcare because of the cost.

Table 4.3
How difficult respondent finds meeting childcare costs, given their family income

	Number	%
Very easy	413	22.3
Easy	639	34.6
Neither easy, nor difficult	450	24.3
Difficult	277	15.0
Very difficult	70	3.8
Total	1,849	100.0

IMPROVING CHILDCARE

Here, we look at how the survey can help us identify ways in which childcare could be improved. This includes parents' responses to this explicit question, as well as difficulties identified by parents in the school holidays in particular, and specific issues around opening hours.

Changes identified by parents

More than half of respondents (58.8 per cent) selected a change that they would like to make to childcare in their local area (Figure 4.6). These can be grouped roughly into four types of response: availability-related; affordability-related; flexibility-related; and suitability-related.[9] Each of these presents as a significant area for improvement, with availability being cited by around one-third of respondents (32.5 per cent), suitability and flexibility by between one-fifth and one-quarter (23.7 per cent and 21.8 per cent respectively), and affordability by

Figure 4.6
Those who have chosen a change they would like to make to childcare in their local area which would be most helpful and suited to their needs
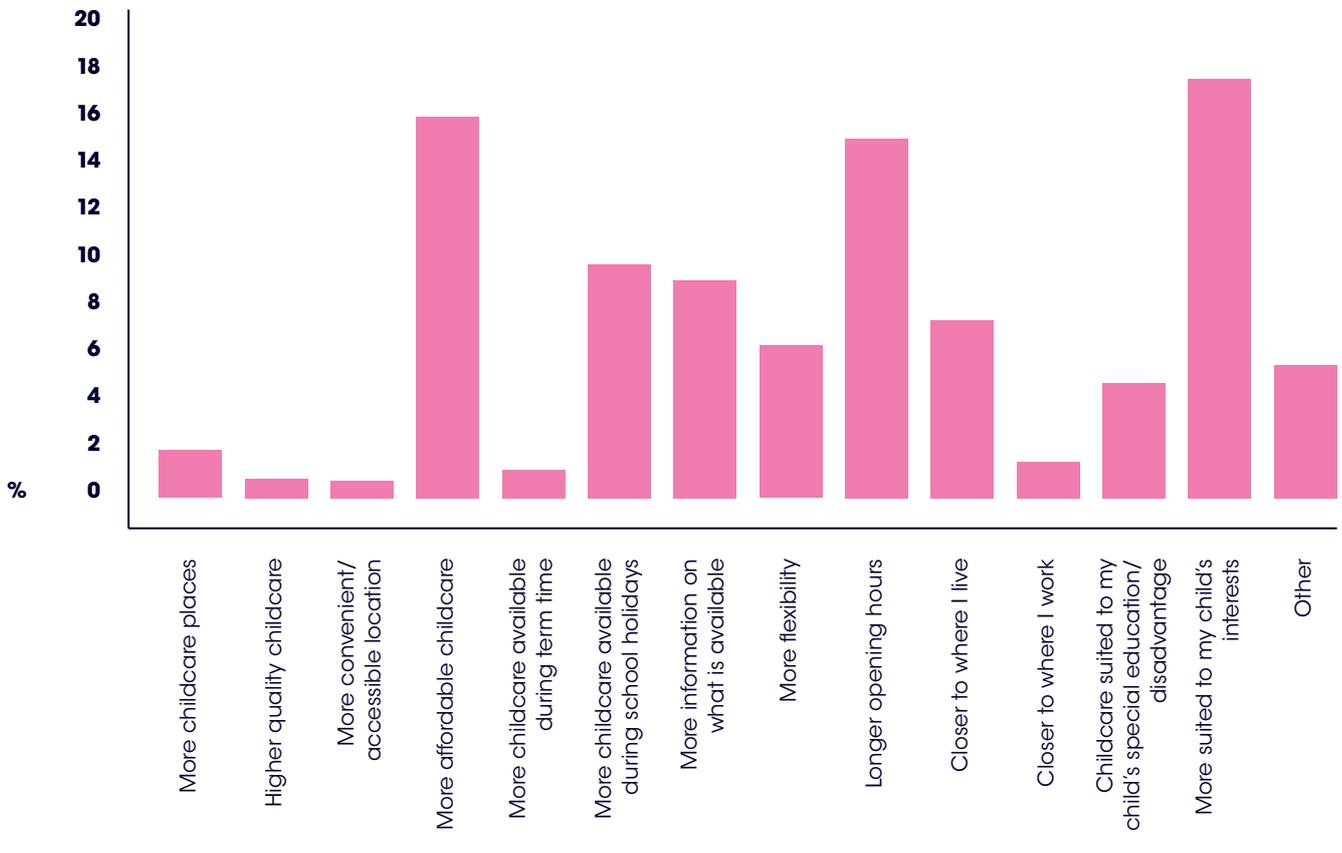
16.3 per cent. Of course, with respondents only being invited to propose one change, each of these proportions is likely to understate the level of concern in that area. Nonetheless, it does demonstrate that parents require a range of qualities from childcare, suggesting that the design of an appropriate childcare landscape is a multi-dimensional task.

Out-of-hours childcare

Figure 4.7 illustrates more closely the issue of flexibility and the specific question of out-of-hours childcare. It shows that there is a significant proportion – around one-quarter – of parents of school-aged children with a partner working full time who say that working before 8am or after 6pm causes problems with childcare (before 8am was cited by slightly more respondents – 25.4 per cent compared with 24 per cent). This is a higher proportion than cited concerns with opening hours in the question about changes to local childcare (though that was still the third most popular response), which supports the theory that those responses may understate the level of concerns, given that parents may be experiencing multiple issues with childcare.

Figure 4.7
Whether working before 8am and after 6pm causes problems in terms of childcare (those whose partners are working full time)
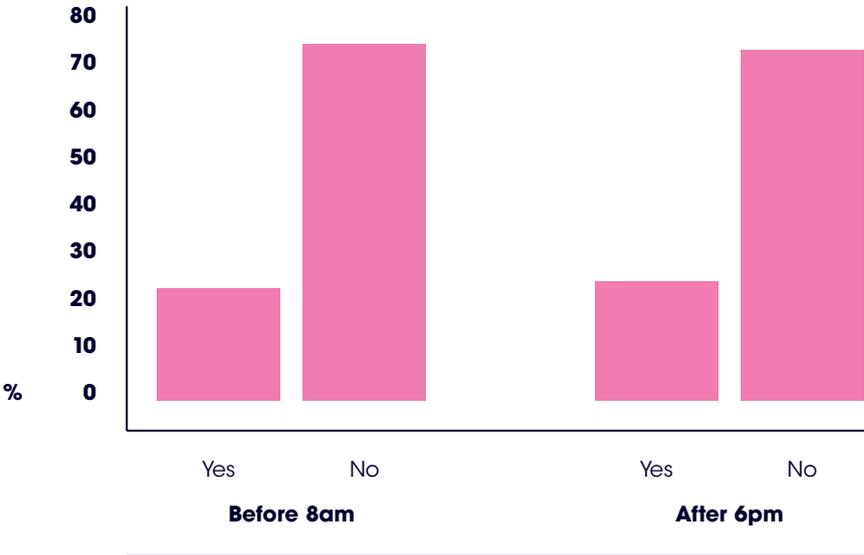
Holiday childcare

Finally, we consider the particular issue of childcare during the school holidays. Among those who find it difficult to arrange suitable childcare during the school holidays (something which 23.7 per cent cited as either 'difficult' or 'very difficult'),[10] the biggest single issue was affordability – cited by one-third (33.9 per cent) of respondents. The only other issue attracting a high level of response (cited by one-quarter, or 25.6 per cent, of respondents) is fairly ambiguous as to its implications for formal childcare provision – families and friends not always being available to help. Certainly, this suggests that a large proportion of parents rely on informal childcare arrangements in the school holidays (and presumably this is true too for those who do not find it difficult to arrange suitable childcare), but it is unclear what this means in relation to formal childcare take-up, and why specifically formal childcare is not resolving this difficulty. Among other responses, one-fifth (20.5 per cent) could be said to relate to availability,[11] while 14.5 per cent relate to quality or appropriateness.[12] Overall, it is clear not only that there are specific issues around childcare in the school holidays, but also that cost is a key concern: if we ignore the ambiguous response of friends and family not always being available to help, approaching half (45.6 per cent) of those having difficulties with holiday childcare specified affordability as their main concern.

Figure 4.8
Of those who find it difficult to arrange suitable childcare during school holidays for the times when their children would usually be at school, they find it difficult because:
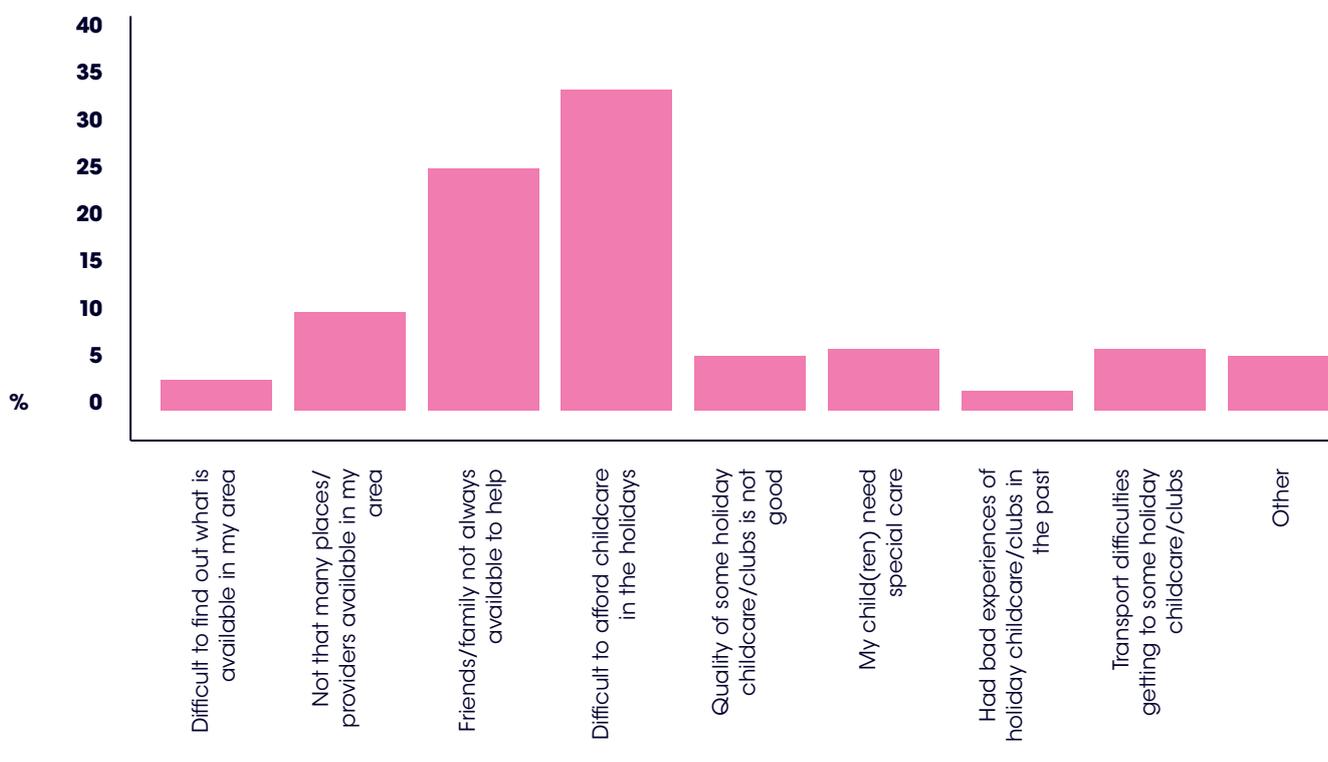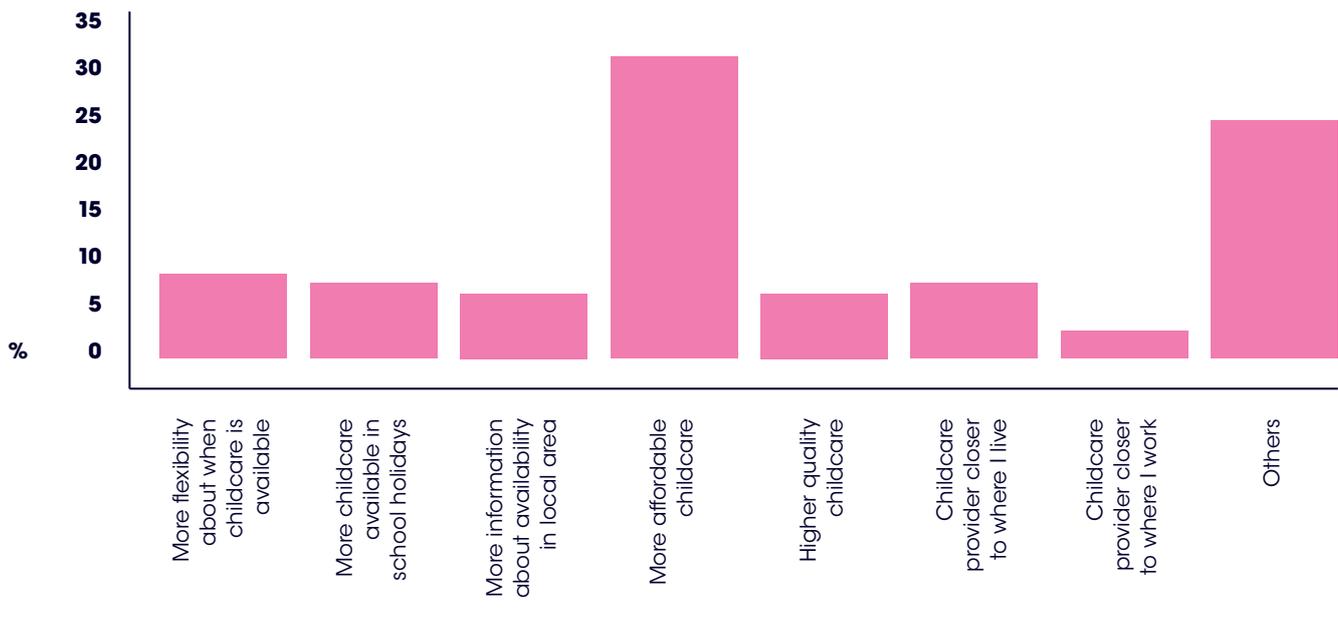
FORMAL AND INFORMAL CHILDCARE

We know that many parents make use of informal childcare, in whole or in part, while they work. This has been apparent in some of the responses above, and Figure 4.9 illustrates the barriers to using formal childcare for the 31.1 per cent of respondents who reported using informal childcare in the previous week – and who had not used formal childcare in the past year. For the purposes of this question, informal childcare includes an ex-spouse, former partner, the child's other parent who does not live in the respondent's household, grandparent(s), older siblings, other relatives, and friends or neighbours. Formal childcare includes a wide range of providers, including nurseries, childminders, home-based carers and school-based care, including extended schools.

Among this group of respondents, greater affordability was cited by almost a third (32.3 per cent) as a change that would make them start using formal childcare, roughly twice the proportion among the general sample offering suggestions for improvements to childcare in their local area. Approaching one-fifth (18.2 per cent) cited general issues around improved availability,[13] with a further 8.1 per cent raising childcare availability in the school holidays. Small proportions also responded with the need for improved flexibility (9.1 per cent) and quality (7.1 per cent). As with previous questions, it is clear that there is a range of aspects of formal childcare that are important to parents. Parents find ways to make childcare and paid employment work for their family, but there

Figure 4.9
Which of these options would make you start using formal childcare?[14]

are, nonetheless, changes to formal childcare that would entice them to make use of it. This may have important implications, in particular, where policy seeks to promote other goals through childcare than simply increased employment.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the views of parents of five to 14-year-old children – the most likely beneficiaries of the childcare element of extended schools – as expressed in the survey, it is clear that childcare remains a significant barrier to work for many. Almost two-thirds of non-working parents would do so if they could arrange childcare that was convenient, reliable and affordable.

There are particular issues relating to school holidays, where a model of extended schools that included holiday provision could play a strong role, allowing existing routines to be retained or adapted. A significant proportion even of full-time workers feel constrained in the hours they can work by the affordability or availability of holiday care.

We see, too, the multi-faceted nature of childcare needs. The survey responses suggest that, for many parents, it is not simply a question of affordability, flexibility, availability or suitability – all of which were cited by many parents as being deficiencies in the current childcare offer. Rather, some combination of these factors may often be what is holding parents back from working, or from working as they would like to.

It is clear, also, that childcare does not exist in a vacuum. A significant proportion of the partners of working parents said that working outside the 8am to 6pm window posed childcare problems. Affordability is a relative concept, and, like hours of childcare needs, depends both on the structure of the labour market and on a particular parent's power within it. Transport has an impact on what childcare can be accessed, as well as which jobs. In addition, families have differential access to informal childcare, and different families may have different personal or cultural beliefs about placing their children in formal childcare.

If childcare is about empowering parents to reach the right work-life balance for them, it is clear that some parents have better access to this ideal than others. Partly, this depends on what a family wants or prioritises (some balances are easier to obtain than others in our current landscape); partly, it depends on access to informal childcare; partly, it depends on the local childcare environment; and partly, it depends on the job prospects and wage levels of an individual or their partner. Often, it depends on a combination of these.

As we move on to consider the role that extended schools can play in facilitating this empowerment – and making recommendations on how policymakers, schools and future researchers can help develop the model to this end – we must keep in mind both the variety of needs families have of childcare, and the role of

other social and economic factors in shaping these. Understanding both families' needs and the wider economic and social contexts in which they are embedded must play a significant role in informing the design of extended schools if they are to achieve their full potential as a social policy tool.

Notes

1. Department for Education, *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015*, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516924/SFR09-2016_Childcare_and_Early_Years_Parents_Survey_2014-15_report.pdf.pdf

2. L Judge, *Round the Clock: in-work poverty and the 'hours question'*, CPAG, 2015

3. These responses comprised: 'I cannot find free/cheap childcare'; 'I cannot find good quality childcare'; 'I cannot afford good quality childcare'; 'I cannot find reliable childcare'; 'I cannot find childcare for the hours/days I need'; and 'I cannot find a childcare place as local providers are full'.

4. Note: while we know that respondents have at least one school-aged child, we do not know how many may also have a younger child or children, which may influence the proportion giving this response in particular.

5. This question was answered by those who do not work, excluding those on maternity leave and long-term sick leave. Only one answer picked.

6. For this question, respondents were asked to give one of a number of work and financial reasons which may explain why they are not working. This table considers only those who responded with the general category 'childcare reasons'.

7. 'Neither agree nor disagree' for full-time workers was 21.8 per cent; for part-time workers, 19.4 per cent.

8. 'Neither agree nor disagree' for full-time workers was 21 per cent; for part-time workers, 20.1 per cent.

9. We take availability-related to comprise 'more childcare places', 'more convenient/accessible location', 'more childcare available during term-time', 'more available during school holidays', 'more information on what's available', 'closer to where I live', and 'closer to where I work'; affordability-related to comprise 'more affordable childcare'; flexibility-related to comprise 'more flexibility' and 'longer opening hours'; and suitability-related to comprise 'higher quality childcare', 'childcare suited to my child's special education/disadvantage', and 'more suited to my child's interests'.

10. Not including 13.1 per cent who answered 'neither easy nor difficult', or 3.4 per cent who said that the situation varies according to the holiday in question.

11. 'Difficult to find out what is available in my area', 'not that many places/providers available in my area', and 'transport difficulties getting to some holiday childcare/clubs'.

12. 'Quality of some holiday childcare/clubs is not good', 'my child(ren) need special care', 'had bad experiences of holiday childcare/clubs in the past'.

13. 'More information about availability in local area', 'childcare provider closer to where I live', and 'childcare provider closer to where I work'.

14. 25.3 per cent selected 'other', with the option to specify a reason (not recorded in quantitative data).

FIVE
POLICY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many roles that extended schools can play, and which have been ascribed to them at different times by policymakers. This makes them a potentially powerful policy response to various challenges facing families, including the multi-dimensional drivers of household food insecurity.

It also adds complexity to designing extended schools, as well as to evaluating their success and identifying areas for improvement. At different times, politicians have emphasised different aspects of the extended schools model, and evaluations have tended to focus on one or two aspects.

In this report, we have identified five key areas in which extended schools could have a substantial role to play, in addition to the cross-cutting food insecurity lens that we took as a launching pad. We take these to be: providing childcare in a trusted setting; acting as a wider community hub; promoting child social and educational development; reducing attainment gaps; and fulfilling a social justice function by helping poorer children in particular. In this report, we have focused on the childcare and social justice functions, while remaining mindful of the other roles that extended schools can and do play.

This report stemmed from analysis of a context in which charitable food assistance to children has increasingly treated the symptoms of child food insecurity, alongside the diminution or withdrawal of systematic approaches that address the root causes of household food and economic insecurity. Extended schools have the potential to be one such response, helping to move away from ad hoc, piecemeal provision that can isolate and stigmatise children, towards an inclusive, strategic approach that can help to prevent family poverty in the round.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS: FROM CHARITY TO STATUTORY PROVISION

In this report, we have identified the slow creep from the systematic, statutory intent of New Labour's extended schools programme to the piecemeal landscape of today, in which charitable provision has played an increasing role. Nowhere is this more evident than with breakfast clubs: originally, these were positioned as part of a suite of structural, state-driven responses to poverty and as a way of promoting educational attainment and social inclusion. Today, however, they are increasingly framed in such a way as to emphasise their role in meeting the needs of poor and hungry children, and in plugging gaps in state provision.

We have identified three key reasons why this drift has taken place. First, the original policy intent was not backed up by a statutory framework to embed this model of extended school. Rather, schools were left with a large degree of autonomy, not only in how to provided extended school services, but also whether to provide them at all (though the vast majority do indeed have some form of provision). Second, dedicated funding for extended schools has not been forthcoming, leaving provision dependent on a mix of sources – the pupil premium; core school funding; and user fees, with means-tested support available to parents via funding dedicated to childcare. Finally, the broader political environment has changed since the 2007/08 financial crisis, and particularly the decision to promote austerity as a response. This has not only helped to drive more chronic need – hence a need for hunger-related interventions – but has also carried a change in political direction away from statutory provision and towards a mixture of individual self-reliance and charity.

The original vision of extended schools has never been fully realised. If we are to have an educational landscape in which every school is genuinely an extended school, offering a comparable service to its pupils, parents and local community, then a systematic approach is needed. This leaves open a number of questions, which we consider below, but, ultimately, a move from charity towards comprehensive statutory provision in some form is a prerequisite.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS AS A DEPRIVATION INTERVENTION

If we assume that one role of extended schools in future is to support children from low-income or otherwise deprived families in particular, we must return to the question of how best to target deprived children. A fully universal approach is one way in which to guarantee at least theoretical access to all deprived children (including those who might not qualify on income grounds), and ought to be our starting point, given its advantages in terms of take-up and quality. But where it is likely to be prohibitively expensive, an approach based on progressive universalism – such as the sliding-scale fee model used in Denmark, with some

free places available – might be a more affordable way of achieving this. In common with a fully universal approach, though, a focus on eliminating costs does not directly address any non-financial barriers to using extended schools – for example, flexibility of provision or cultural resistance.

There are many variants of more targeted means-tested support, including the current UK system of financial assistance through tax credits and universal credit, which could aim more specifically at poorer children (though the UK model currently excludes children of non-working parents). For this to work, all provision would also have to be formally registered. This could, however, still risk excluding children from middle-income families, for whom costs are often a significant barrier to using formal childcare, as well as potentially promoting a model which isolates children from low-income families, and which risks creating 'poor services for poor people'.[1] If policymakers are serious about developing an extended schools model from which more deprived children derive the maximum possible benefit, these are questions that warrant further investigation.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS AS A MODEL: PRESCRIPTION VERSUS AUTONOMY

One of the key aspects of the UK approach to extended schools is the lack of a prescriptive model. On the one hand, this accords schools a large degree of autonomy in responding to their particular environment, and to the needs of their pupils, parents and local community. On the other, it can lead to a wide variation from school to school, and create a 'postcode lottery' in terms of the provision available. This tension is not unique to extended schools, and while, in the absence of a systematic mapping of extended school provision, it is impossible to be definitive, the evidence of unmet need suggests the need for a clearer framework.

The move back towards statutory provision of extended schools services described above mandates such a framework, in some form. Notably, countries such as Denmark and Sweden, in which extended schools are most strongly embedded, have clear requirements on municipalities to provide a certain level of service. What should be the core elements of an extended schools model for the UK is something that requires further research, but there need not be a contradiction between having a clear framework and individual schools being able to respond to their specific circumstances.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS AS CHILDCARE

It has been evident throughout the research conducted for this report that extended schools can play an important role in childcare and helping parents to work. Our data analysis has shown that there is an untapped supply of labour among non-working parents for whom improved childcare has the potential to

make a substantial difference. Further investigation is needed to establish exactly how extended schools can best respond to this shortfall, but barriers seem to coalesce around flexibility, availability, suitability and cost. At a time of increased policy focus on childcare, on its provision and on its funding, now is good time to revisit extended schools as part of this agenda.

The potential prize is huge: Denmark, with its comprehensive system of extended schools, has the highest female employment rate in the European Union.[2] Of course, there is a wider context at play there, including world-leading pre-school childcare, but there are surely also lessons to be learned. One is that the UK's patchwork of funding leads to a complex interface for parents, with user charges subsidised for some through tax credits or universal credit, whereas Denmark operates an income-based sliding scale, including fee-free access for some.

There is also a wider context to consider, including the part-time pay penalty and gender pay gap, an hour-glass labour market that leads to chronically low wage levels for millions, and labour market flexibility meaning very different things for low and for high earners. It is for governments to decide to what extent they shape this context and to what extent they model childcare – including extended schools – to fit. But it is clear that, as part of this balancing act, extended schools offer huge untapped potential as an employment-promoting policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here, we set out the steps needed to develop a renewed extended schools programme. We make recommendations in three areas, focusing on the principles that a future extended schools policy should embody, particularly with regard to their childcare and social justice functions. We consider the **design** of extended schools, and how this can ensure that the needs of children, parents and local communities are met to the greatest possible extent. We look at **funding**, and how this can complement design and ensure that it enables all those children and families who could benefit from extended schools to do so. And we set out some recommendations on **future research**, and how this can both plug gaps in knowledge and promote a framework and models of extended schools that will help them to best meet the policy goals ascribed to them.

Design

With many possible aims to satisfy, and a large number of possible particular approaches that can be taken to satisfying them, it is impossible here for us to specify an exact approach. We can, however, recommend approaches that could be undertaken and principles that should be followed.

- The Department for Education should map the provision that currently exists, to evaluate how well it is working, and to take steps to investigate what parents want.

- The government should provide a basic guarantee of provision to all school-aged children (with room for different requirements for primary and secondary schools, or other age-specific provision), including specified minimum hours, and mandate schools to offer it. Beyond this, schools should have a degree of autonomy over the exact make-up of that provision, depending on the needs of their pupils, parents and local community.

- Provision should be based on an inclusive model that seeks to include all children, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that disadvantaged children take part.

- In particular, breakfast club provision should be brought under the aegis of the extended schools programme, rather than continuing to exist in a piecemeal, often charity-provided and donor-funded fashion. In future, the availability of nourishing food should be part of any before- or after-school or holiday provision. Learning about food preparation could also be part of extended schools offer.

- At the national and individual school level, provision should be designed with the involvement both of young people and of parents, so that extended schools meet their needs.

- With extended schools having the potential to have positive impacts across the education, adult basic skills, labour market and social justice policy agendas, the government should take a cross-departmental approach to delivering a renewed extended schools programme, which could include the appointment of a cross-departmental minister or task force.

Funding

In order to deliver the renewed extended schools agenda, funding arrangements need to be put in place that both adequately resource the schools offering the provision and ensure that all children for whom they are beneficial are able to take advantage.

- The government should make available dedicated funding for extended schools to deliver the full range of benefits of which they are capable.

- Existing funding for breakfast clubs should be incorporated into extended schools funding, in order to ensure that provision is systematic and inclusive.

- The government should pilot different models of user charging, to find a model which ensures that cost is not a barrier to children benefiting from the extended schools offer, and which interfaces coherently with existing childcare subsidies.

- All provision should be suitably registered to ensure parents will be eligible for childcare subsidies.

Future research

The renewed extended schools programme must be built on evidence. Much of the required research and evaluation should be built in as an integral part of the development and delivery of the extended schools policy agenda, conducted or commissioned by government, as appropriate. There is still a need for a broader evidence base and academics and civil society organisations can help fill key gaps.

- There is a need for qualitative research to identify the barriers to parents making use of extended schools as a childcare solution and, more broadly, to identify the features of an extended schools model that would fit parents' and children's needs.

- There is scope for local piloting of different approaches to ensuring that disadvantaged children are able to make use of extended schools, and able to benefit from them, including different varieties of targeted and of universal approaches.

- An evaluation of different international models of extended schools, and how they interact with the political, economic and social environment in the country in question, would be helpful for drawing appropriate lessons to inform policy and practice in the UK.

Notes

1. To paraphrase Richard Titmuss, who actually said: 'Separate discriminatory services for poor people have always tended to be poor quality services'. P Alcock, H Glennerster, A Oakley and A Sinfield (eds), *Welfare and Wellbeing: Richard Titmuss's contribution to social policy*, Policy Press, 2001

2. *Women and Men in the Danish Labour Market*, European Observatory of Working Life, March 2011

APPENDIX
METHODOLOGY

In September 2017, an initial scoping review was undertaken which involved conducting a systematic search for literature and mapping all evidence relevant to the project.

Three searches were undertaken: a systematic search of academic databases (Proquest, Science Direct, Scopus and Web of Science); a targeted search for grey literature in the search engine Google; and a government document search on Google targeting government websites. Six search terms were used: (1) "Extended Schools", (2) "Enhanced School Day", (3) "Wraparound Childcare" (4) "Childcare AND Schools", (5) "Food Insecurity AND Childcare", (6) "Extended Schools AND Household Economic Outcome* OR Income". This approach identified seven UK sources that were deemed relevant to the research aims and objectives. From the targeted internet search using the search engine Google to retrieve grey literature, seven supplementary pieces of relevant evidence relating to the research have been obtained; 15 government documents were also obtained via a Google search by targeting government websites – 30 pieces in total.

The scoping review involved an initial analysis of research abstracts and summaries to identify broadly what the evidence covered in relation to: the nature of any evidence relating to the impacts of extended schools on household economic and food insecurity (some literature addressed economic aspects, none addressed food insecurity); the overall impacts of the extended schools initiative (addressed by evaluations, policy documents and research papers); and how previous initiatives have conceptualised and implemented extended schools programmes (addressed by a variety of sources). Once the initial scoping review process had taken place, sources were read in full and formed the basis of much of the discussion within sections one, two and three of this report.

The report also draws on the findings of two surveys: the Department for Education's Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015 and Childcare and Early Year Providers Survey 2013. A search of the data archives of the UK Data Service website was conducted in September 2017, and these two surveys were deemed relevant for the report. The Childcare and Early Year Providers Survey's accompanied report was used to extract the key findings

related to 'out-of-school' providers (classified within the report as before-school care, after-school care and holiday care) to provide an overview of what the current landscape of this childcare currently looks like to date – this is found in section 4.[1] Using the data from the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015,[2] the software package SPSS IBM version 23 was utilised to explore and summarise the data and conduct a range of descriptive statistics, also found in section 4.

Notes

1. Department for Education, *Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey*, 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355075/SFR33_2014_Main_report.pdf

2. Department for Education, *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015*, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516924/SFR09-2016_Childcare_and_Early_Years_Parents_Survey_2014-15_report.pdf.pdf