

Summary review of evidence: Childcare

This note summarises key evidence about the links between childcare and employment and sets out sources for further information and data.

Childcare

'Childcare' typically includes all types of early childhood education and care provided by a registered childcare professional, approved childcare professional and through informal arrangements.

Current situation in Scotland

Results from the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study for parents of 10 month old children in 2005/06 (birth cohort 1 (BC1)) and in 2010/11 (birth cohort 2 (BC2)), showed that 79% of those using childcare in BC2 were using at least one informal arrangement and 39% were using at least one formal arrangement. Compared with BC1, use of any informal provision increased from 75%, whereas use of any formal provision has remained static. Those who were using formal childcare arrangements in BC2 were more likely to be using them in combination with an informal provider.

On average, families using childcare did so for 22 hours per week in BC2, almost identical to the corresponding figure of 21 hours for BC1.

The average weekly cost of childcare for parents with 10 month old children was £88. Comparing with Birth Cohort 1 data indicates that in real terms, there has been an average increase in childcare costs for a 10 month old child of £12 per week, or approximately £624 per year.¹

Maternity and Paternity Rights and Women Returners Survey data from 2009/10² suggested that the mean length of maternity leave taken by women was 39 weeks in 2008. Less than half of mothers used the remaining period of unpaid leave. The same survey found that 91% of fathers took some time off around their baby's birth, though not all of these took statutory paternity leave. There are no available statistics for take up of statutory parental leave or additional paternity leave.

The Third European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) report³ showed that, in the EU-27, the proportion of men and women who said that they were involved in caring for children or grandchildren at least once a week was 21 per cent and 33 per cent respectively, but of those in paid employment who were engaged in these tasks at least once a week, men spent 18 hours on childcare while women spent 28. In the UK, men spent on average 26 hours per week caring for children, while women spent 47 hours.

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00414739.pdf>

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/193400/777summ.pdf

³ <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/64/en/1/EF1264EN.pdf>

Academic literature

The timing of having children and the decision to have children are often related to career prospects. Jyrkinen and McKie (2012) report on the trade-off between 'young talent' but threat of maternity leave, and older women with or without grown-up children, but who face encounters of ageism at the workplace.

Gender role attitudes may change after the birth of a child. Schober and Scott (2012) investigated how these changes relate to women's paid work and the type of childcare used. Their results suggested that less traditional attitudes among women and men (and more sharing of childcare responsibilities) were more likely in couples where women's labour market participation after childbirth and their take-up of formal childcare contradicted their traditional prenatal gender role attitudes. Women's prenatal earnings had an indirect effect on attitude change of both partners through incentives for maternal employment.

However, the social and cultural context should not be underestimated in comparative policy analyses. When looking at parental childcare and labour market organisation, it is not just the institutional effects which matter, but also the cultural differences (e.g. Craig and Mullan, 2011; Sayer and Gornick, 2012).

Among some of the wider-reaching reasons for the postponement of first births in Western societies, Mills et al. (2011) highlight the rise of effective contraception, increases in women's education and labour market participation, value changes, housing conditions, economic uncertainty and the absence of supportive family policies as the central reasons behind the trend. The authors also discuss whether direct or indirect cash-transfers and work-life balance policies can be effective in mitigating postponement, which have mixed results, partly explained by the different cultural contexts of Western societies in their attitudes towards families, women and employment.

Further information

Growing up in Scotland <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue?sn=5760>

Time Use Survey (TUS) <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/series/?sn=2000054>

Craig, L. and Mullan, K. (2011) How Mothers and Fathers Share Childcare: A Cross-National Time-Use Comparison, *American Sociological Review*, 76(6), pp. 834-861.

Jyrkinen and McKie (2012) Gender, age and ageism: experiences of women managers in Finland and Scotland, *Work, Employment and Society*, 26 (1), pp. 61-77.

Mills, M., Rindfuss, R., McDonald, P. and te Velde, E. (2011) Why do people postpone parenthood? Reasons and social policy incentives, *Human Reproduction Update*, 17(6), pp. 848-886.

Sayer, L. and Gornick, J. (2012) Cross-national Variation in the Influence of Employment Hours on Child Care Time, *European Sociological Review*, 28(4), pp. 421-442.

Schober, P. and Scott, J. (2012) Maternal employment and gender role attitudes: dissonance among British men and women in the transition to parenthood, *Work, Employment and Society*, 26(3), pp. 514-530.