

Essex County Council

Directorate of Schools, Children & Families

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2008



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The detailed breakdown of childcare supply data down to ward level can be seen at www.essex.gov.uk - Early Years and Childcare – Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

1 Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 places a range of duties on local authorities in regard to the provision of sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs. Local authorities are required to play a lead role in facilitating the childcare market within the broader framework of shaping children's services, in partnership with the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.

Sufficient childcare is defined as '*sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in [the local authority's] area who require childcare in order to enable them to*

- *take up, or remain in, work, or*
- *undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.*

(Section 6, Childcare Act 2006)

There is also an additional duty '*to secure free early years provision for pre-school children of a prescribed age.*

(Section 7, Childcare Act 2006)

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This report sets out the assessment of sufficiency regarding the supply of childcare and parental demand for childcare within Essex and has been carried out by Essex County Council. The parental needs aspect of the assessment was conducted by Coda Consultants.

This report enables Essex County Council to identify gaps and establish plans to ensure the provision of high quality, accessible and affordable childcare, which meets the needs of families living in the county and thereby to perform its Childcare Duty as outlined in the Children Act (2006).

It provides a measure and assessment of supply and demand for childcare

- within each county district, creating a detailed picture of local need and enabling consultation and planning to take place with relevant partners and childcare providers.
- that highlights any shortages of childcare provision, including access to affordable childcare
- that highlights any shortages of childcare provision for disabled children, or children with other specific needs
- that highlights restrictions in choice including flexibility, opening hours and age appropriate provision.

2 Methodology

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has been informed by a range of qualitative and quantitative data. The sources of data and dates of its collection have been acknowledged throughout this report. Wherever possible, data was current at 31st January 2008 or was the most recent available. It is acknowledged that this information, especially relating to supply can only represent a snapshot in time. However, when put in the context of other trend data and qualitative data collected from parents and childcare providers the report presents clear indicators concerning sufficiency requirements.

2.1 Geography

The geographical areas for the Assessment have been at county, district and ward level. Five additional Booster Areas were selected to provide further information on particular communities; the areas selected were the A13 corridor, Clacton town, Maldon East, Uttlesford District and Colchester town. Within this report we present findings at county and district level. The more detailed information can be found in the appendices which can be viewed at www.essex.gov.uk under Early Years and Childcare, Childcare Sufficiency.

2.2 Sources of data

2.2.1 Supply of childcare

Information on the current supply of childcare provision across the county was provided by the Essex Childcare Audit which detailed current childcare supply by District and Ward, as at April 2006. This Audit has been updated by the Early Years and Childcare Service Children Community Development Officers and Development Officers from each sector (4children, Pre-school Learning Alliance, National Child Minding Association and National Day Nurseries Association) on a termly basis.

2.2.2 Demand for childcare

District childcare sufficiency working groups

Each district formed a working group to review the information provided within the Childcare Audit and bring to it local intelligence as to the take up of places, waiting lists, perceived barriers to access and future demand. These groups consist of:

- Children's Community Development Officer
- Extended Schools Co-ordinator
- Pre-school Development Officer
- Childminding Development Worker
- Out of School Development Officer
- National Day Nurseries Development Officer

Development staff through regular visits and a telephone audit reviewed the take up of places in settings, the size of waiting lists and how these fluctuate over the year, and the number of active childminders. This work is being constantly reviewed through regular contact with settings, and Development staff are able to update the district information at termly meetings of the working group.

Between November 2007 and February 2008 a consultation exercise took place to establish the views of parents and carers in Essex regarding childcare.

Parental survey

A questionnaire survey was undertaken with 'users' and 'non-users' of registered childcare provision in each of the twelve district areas within the local authority. The key objectives of the survey were to:

- (a) Establish the extent to which childcare provision is currently meeting the needs of local parents and families, and
- (b) Establish the demand for existing childcare provision and the demand for potential future (types of) childcare provision.

The questionnaire was distributed for self-completion to users of formal childcare and non-users of formal childcare, within each of the twelve district areas. The questionnaire was distributed to 'users' of childcare, by contacting all existing day care providers and childminders that operated within the twelve districts and requesting that they circulate the forms to those parents and carers accessing their setting/care. The day care providers included:

- Day nurseries
- Pre-school/playgroups
- Local Children's Centres
- Crèches
- Out of school childcare providers

The questionnaire was also distributed to non-users of childcare by contacting existing community groups and voluntary organisations - and requesting that they circulate it to the parents that they come into contact with.

For both target audiences a deadline for return of completed questionnaire forms was established (31st January 2008) and completed questionnaire forms were returned via FREEPOST to Essex County Council.

A proportional sampling frame was designed and target numbers of user and non-user respondents for each of the twelve districts of Essex were calculated, proportional to the size of their 0-19 population. The target across Essex was 760 responses from childcare users and 760 responses from non-users, and this was achieved.

Focus Groups

The Department of Schools, Family and Children guidance on conducting Childcare Sufficiency Assessments recommends that focus groups with parents, children and young people could be carried out, to supplement information collected through other (quantitative) methods, and to highlight the childcare needs of 'excluded/hard-to-reach' families. Therefore, during the period December 2007 to March 2008, thirteen focus groups were conducted across the Essex locality with parents from the hard-to-reach backgrounds:

The aim of the focus groups was to collect information on issues including:

- (Hard-to-reach) parents' use of formal and informal childcare
- Awareness of childcare provision (where to find it, different types of provision, etc)
- Experiences of barriers to accessing childcare
- How childcare provision could be developed to meet parent's specific needs

The meetings were all conducted on sites familiar to the specific types of parents consulted, and were facilitated by research consultants CODA on behalf of Essex County Council.

Desk research

Desk research was undertaken to provide:

- population demographics and trend data
- an assessment of employment and economic development trends and the likely impact on childcare need
- an exploration of developments likely to affect childcare needs

Consultation with employers

The views of employers is being sought in an additional consultation exercise taking place between March and May 2008. Five employers per district have been identified and interviews have been scheduled. The findings of this research will be added to the report by June 2008.

Other consultations

Childcare providers in each district were consulted on the data collected in relation to supply and demand, and their views have influenced the presentation of this childcare sufficiency assessment, and will feed into future childcare planning in their localities

3 Essex in Context

3.1 The county of Essex

In population terms, Essex is the second largest UK county. Migration and birth patterns in the post-war period saw the Essex population increase by 79 percent between 1951 and 1971. The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s brought a period of slower increase and by mid-2004 the county population was estimated to be some 1,330,400. Projections suggest that the population will continue to grow to 1,385,700 by the end of 2012, meaning that the Essex population will have increased by over 10 percent in the years since 1991.

Despite the scale of Essex's population, the county's 364,500 hectares of land are predominantly agricultural (over 70 percent of land is used for agricultural purposes). Only three towns – Basildon, Chelmsford and Colchester – have populations around the 100,000 mark. The remainder of Essex's citizens – a significant proportion – live in smaller, urban areas and in the county's many relatively dispersed, rural communities. In 2001 almost one quarter of Essex citizens lived in settlements with fewer than 10,000 residents.

3.2 Population

The total population of Essex is estimated at 1,361,235 (source: ONS 2006 mid-year estimates). The population broken down by age group is estimated to be as follows:

Table 1 – Population by age

3 years	4 years	0-4 years	0-17 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	13-19 years	16-24 years	18-64 years
15,058	14,878	76,067	295,998	97,916	86,882	120,897	145,174	832,007

Note: The Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimates allow for natural change due to births and deaths and then add on net migration³. The data sources used in this method are the best available on a nationally consistent basis down to local and health authority areas.

Births in Essex

In Essex overall, the number of live births was at its lowest in 2002, with an increase in the number of live births in the four subsequent years. The table below shows the number of live births in Essex between 2002 – 2006.

Table 2 – Birth rates

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
14,005	14,558	14,881	14,905	15,370

Source: ONS

Ethnicity

In 2001 only 2.9% of the Essex population belonged to Mixed, Black, Asian or Chinese ethnic groups. This is a lower proportion than in England, the East of England and South East. Essex also had a lower proportion of its population identifying with white minority ethnic groups than elsewhere. Yet as Essex continues to grow it is becoming more diverse. The county's black and minority ethnic (BME) population is growing in line with national trends. Those in Essex

identifying with Mixed, Black, Asian or Chinese ethnic groups increased from around 2% of the population in 1991 to 3% in 2001—approximately 22,000 residents.

Source: Essex Trends 2006

3.3 Economic development

Recent decades have seen an expansion of the workforce through the baby boom of the 1960s, an unprecedented economic restructuring, and increased female employment. However, further restructuring is not expected and a slow-down in female participation growth is predicted as the majority of working-age women are already employed. Currently Essex has a jobs deficit with more workers than local jobs available.

3.4 Housing

Current proposals could see the number of new homes built across the East of England between 2001 and 2021 total 508,000. This will increase the number of homes in Essex by almost one-fifth, and as a consequence is likely to increase the number of households in which there are parents requiring childcare for their children.

The overall level of new housing that can be expected in the county over the next few years is given in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England, which is known as the East of England Plan.

Table 3 - Anticipated housing increases (2001 – 2021)

	Average Annual Rate of Build	Net additional dwellings between 2001 and 2021
Basildon	535	10700
Braintree	385	7700
Brentwood	175	3500
Castle Point	200	4000
Chelmsford	800	16000
Colchester	855	17100
Epping Forest	175	3500
Harlow	800	16000
Maldon	120	2400
Rochford	230	4600
Tendring	425	8500
Uttlesford	400	8000

Source: Further Proposed Changes to the Draft East of England Plan, Secretary of State for Communities, 23 October 2007. Taken from the Essex Schools Organisation Plan 2007 – 2012.

Note: Essex County Council publishes a wide range of relevant county demographic and statistical data, which can be found at www.essex.gov.uk

4 Supply of childcare within Essex

The following information gives an overview for the supply of formal childcare by district across Essex. Information was collected to ward level and this can be found in the Childcare Sufficiency Appendices which can be downloaded from www.essex.gov.uk, Early Years and Childcare – Childcare Sufficiency.

Information on the current supply of childcare provision across the county was provided by the Essex Childcare Audit, which detailed current childcare supply by District and Ward, as at April 2006. This Audit has been updated by the Early Years and Childcare Service Children Community Development Officers and Development Officers from each sector (4children, Pre-school Learning Alliance, National Child Minding Association and National Day Nurseries Association) on a termly basis.

Table 4 – Supply of formal childcare places by district in Essex

Childcare places available as at Feb 2008	Day nurseries	Pre-school groups	Child-minders	Breakfast clubs	After-school	Holiday clubs	Total
Basildon	977	1127	649	482	430	320	3985
Braintree	873	729	467	216	236	172	2693
Brentwood	649	635	389	127	139	622	2561
Castle Point	576	545	273	267	225	282	2168
Chelmsford	1939	1157	965	492	447	361	5361
Colchester	1492	995	729	391	299	328	4234
Epping Forest	968	1040	533	184	230	310	3265
Harlow	659	551	576	155	272	248	2461
Maldon	419	669	381	80	114	121	1784
Rochford	470	622	385	166	210	210	2063
Tendring	1055	500	458	452	296	240	3001
Uttlesford	768	636	278	170	320	108	2280
Essex	10845	9206	6083	3182	3218	3322	35856

5 Demand for childcare - Users of childcare in Essex

5.1 Parental demand research survey

Responses from 760 parents (of children aged 0 - 17 years), who were resident within the geographical boundaries of the twelve Essex County Council district areas were attained for the research during the period December 2007 - February 2008.

These parents were 'users' of registered childcare provision, i.e. at the time of the research they had a child or children who accessed one, or more, of the following:

- Day nursery
- Children's Centre
- Nursery school
- Nursery class in a primary school
- Voluntary community nursery
- Pre-school/playgroup
- Childminder
- Approved home child-carer
- After school club
- (Holiday) playscheme
- Adventure playground
- Breakfast club

These parents *may* also have had a child or children who accessed one of the following non-registered forms of support:

- Nanny
- Au-pair
- Parent and toddler group (or a one o'clock club)
- Crèche (if less than 2 hours/day)
- Grandparents
- Other family members
- Friends/neighbours

5.2 Details on respondents

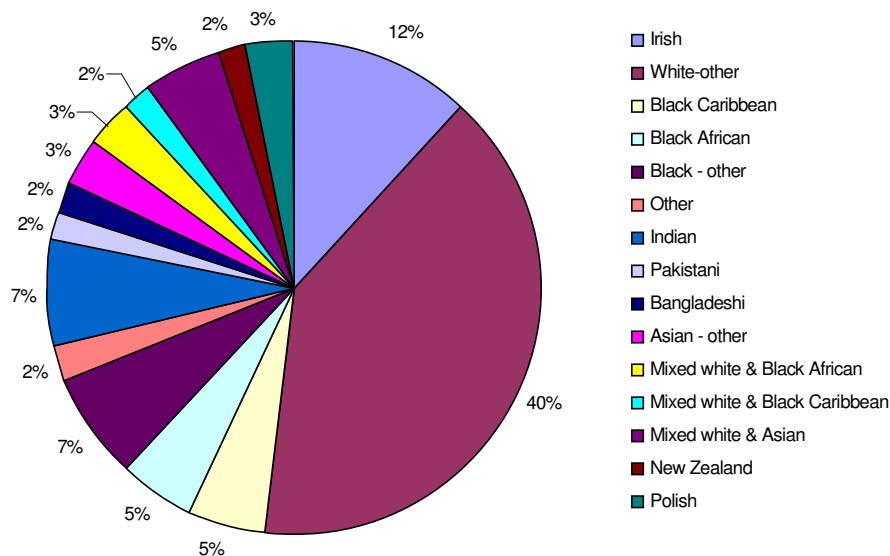
Table 5 below indicates the number of returned questionnaires/ interviews which Coda Consultants and Essex County Council agreed, in November 2007, would be completed with parents who are accessing formal childcare (users of childcare). A 100% response rate was achieved.

Table 5 - Sample numbers of responses achieved in each of the twelve district areas with users of formal childcare

District	Number of Responses
Basildon	100
Braintree	80
Brentwood	40
Castle Point	50
Chelmsford	90
Colchester	95
Epping Forest	70
Harlow	45
Maldon	35
Rochford	45
Tendring	70
Uttlesford	40
Total	760

Figure 1 indicates the ethnicity of the parents who participated in the survey throughout the twelve Essex County Council area districts. 89% of the responding parents were White British. Figure 1 (below), details the ethnicity of the 11% of parents who access formal childcare across the Essex locality and who stated that they were non-White British.

Figure 1 - Ethnicity of parents who participated in the survey in the twelve Essex County Council area districts.



Circumstances of parents and (any) partner

Table 6 highlights the classification that parents, who were users of childcare across the Essex locality, believed *best* described their socio-economic circumstances.

Table 6 - Parent's socio economic circumstances

Socio-economic circumstances	% of parents who choose the (one) classification
Home looking after child(ren)	27%
Maternity/paternity leave	5%
Full-time employment	22%
Part-time employment	41%
Full-time student	1%
Part-time student	1%
Not given	3%

Parents who were users of formal childcare most frequently stated that the classification: part-time employment best described their socio-economic circumstances - 41% of parents. 22% of parents stated that they were in full-time employment. 2% of parents were studying.

Table 7 (below) indicates that when a partner was present they were most frequently in full-time employment.

Table 7 - Any partner's socio-economic circumstances

Socio-economic circumstances	% of parents with an applicable partner
Full-time employment	74%
Part-time employment	3%
Student	0.5%
Not Working	1%
Not applicable	21.5%

Parental income

Parents who were users of formal childcare across Essex were given an option to indicate the level of their total *annual* household income (before tax). Table 8 indicates that the most frequent annual household income of the users of formal childcare in Essex who were consulted for the research was between £40,000 - £59,000/annum, followed in frequency by £30,000 - £39,000/annum.

Table 8 - Indication of annual household Income

Annual Household Income (Before Tax)	% of parents
Under £10,000	7%
£10,000 - £19,000	9%
£20,000 - £29,000	11.5%
£30,000 - £39,000	16.5%
£40,000 - £59,000	23%
£60,000 - £100,000	14%
Over £100,000	3%
No response (chosen)	15.5%

Children with special needs

Table 9 outlines the number of children, cared for by one of the 760 parents consulted throughout the county, who had three specific types of disability and who were accessing a type of formal childcare - most frequently a day nursery.

Table 9 - Number of children with a special need/disability accessing formal childcare

No. of children being raised by the 760 parents surveyed	No. of children with a speech and language difficulty	No. of children with a physical disability	No. of children with a learning difficulty
1,234	4	21	18

The table indicates that of the 1,234 children that the total 760 parents surveyed were raising, 3.5% of children had a special need or a disability: most frequently a physical disability.

5.3 Current usage of childcare

Figure 2 indicates the current proportional use of formal childcare by users who were consulted via the research. The diagram indicates that, in terms of early years childcare, users were most frequently accessing a pre-school/playgroup, followed in frequency by a day nursery. The type of out of school childcare that was being accessed with the highest frequency was an after school club.

Figure 2 – Current use of formal childcare by users of childcare

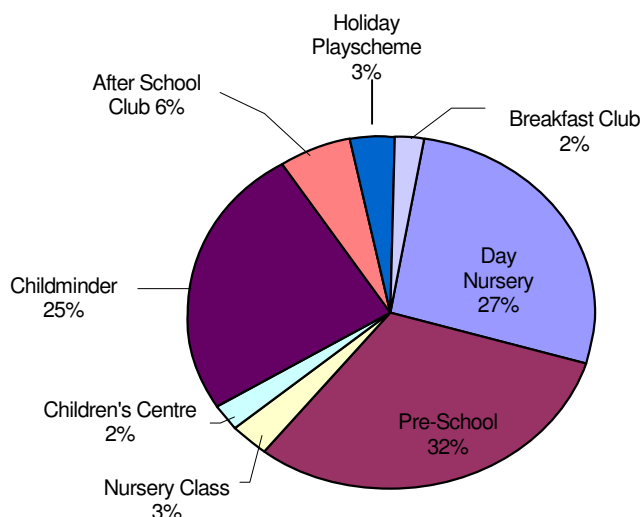


Table 10 below outlines types of *informal* childcare that users of formal childcare across the Essex (area) reported that they also accessed/ used.

Table 10 - Types of *informal* childcare that users of formal childcare across the county reported that they also accessed/used

(Where) type of formal childcare accessed	% of users <i>also</i> accessing a parent and toddler group	% of users <i>also</i> obtaining childcare support via grandparents	% of users <i>also</i> obtaining childcare support via family members	% of users <i>also</i> obtaining childcare support via friends
Day Nursery	3.5%	9%	2%	2%
Pre-School	4.5%	10%	1.5%	1%
Nursery Class	8%	13%	2.5%	2%
Children's Centre	0.5%	1%	0.5%	0
Childminder	1%	1%	0.5%	0.5%
After School Club	2.5%	8%	1%	1%
Holiday Playscheme	0%	2%	0.5%	1%
Breakfast Club	0%	1.5%	1%	0.5%

Table 10 indicates that a relatively higher number of parents across the Essex area who are accessing formal *out of school* childcare *also* 'access' support via informal childcare than those who are accessing (just or a combination of) formal *early years* childcare.

5.4 Paying for childcare

The parents who were currently accessing formal childcare were invited to state the degree to which they found their arrangements affordable. Table 11 (below) indicates the collective response of these parents:

Table 11 - Degree to which users of formal childcare found their childcare arrangements affordable

Classification	% of parents making classification
Very affordable	9%
Affordable	32.5%
Sometimes difficult to afford	24%
Often difficult to afford	6%
Very difficult to afford	4%
No response	23.5%

Table 11 indicates that parents who were currently accessing formal childcare most frequently considered it 'affordable', followed in frequency by (it being) 'sometimes difficult to afford'.

Table 12 indicates the types of funding sources that parents who were accessing formal childcare across the Essex districts were obtaining support from. The table outlines the percentage of parents who were accessing financial support, or in the case of the Nursery Education Fund, had a child who attended a funded place at an early years' childcare setting:

Table 12 - Types of funding sources that parents who were accessing formal childcare were obtaining support from

District	(Childcare element of the) Working Tax Credit	Nursery Education Fund for 3 and 4 year olds	Childcare vouchers from employers
Basildon	25%	36%	10%
Braintree	17%	23%	7%
Brentwood	0	6%	3%
Castle Point	5%	11%	1%
Chelmsford	22%	22%	11%
Colchester	23%	40%	11%
Epping Forest	11%	25%	9%
Harlow	15%	13%	7%
Maldon	4%	13%	5%
Rochford	11%	18%	2%
Tendring	21%	19%	4%
Uttlesford	2%	12%	14%

Table 13 comprises a comparison between the types of funding parents with a partner were accessing across the Essex locality (area) with the types of funding lone parents stated they were accessing.

Table 13 - Numbers of parents with a partner and lone parents accessing certain types of funding for childcare

Parents' circumstances	(Childcare element of the) Working Tax Credit	Nursery Education Fund for 3 and 4 year olds	Childcare vouchers from employers
Lone parent	42	20	5
Partner/married	92	189	100

A higher *proportion* of lone parents were accessing financial support towards childcare via the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit than the parents who have a partner. However (not surprisingly), a higher proportion of parents who have a partner were accessing childcare vouchers from an employer, in comparison to lone parents.

Affordability

Table 14 indicates the views on the affordability of their childcare arrangements of parents, across the Essex (area), who access formal childcare, and who also provided a classification of their annual household income (bracket). It should be noted that 66% of parents who access formal childcare answered the question pertaining to 'how affordable they found their current childcare arrangements'.

Table 14 - Views on the affordability (where given) of their childcare arrangements of parents who access formal childcare

Annual Household Income Level	Very affordable	Affordable	Sometimes difficult to afford	Often difficult to afford	Always difficult to afford
Under £10,000	19%	22%	39%	6%	14%
£10,000 - £19,000	13%	41%	26%	11%	9%
£20,000 - £29,000	17%	26%	42%	8%	6%
£30,000 - £39,000	10%	30%	37%	17%	4%
£40,000 - £59,000	11%	47%	31%	7%	8%
£60,000 - £100,000	7%	57%	29%	5%	1%
Over £100,000	30%	45%	20%	0	5%

5.5 Preferred childcare options

Figure 4 details how satisfied parents who are accessing formal childcare across the twelve districts evidently are with their existing arrangements. It should be noted that these parents *could* be:

- (a) Solely accessing formal childcare
- (b) Accessing a combination of formal childcare and informal childcare (i.e. a parent and toddler groups, grandparents, other family members, friends)

Figure 3 - Satisfaction with existing childcare arrangements

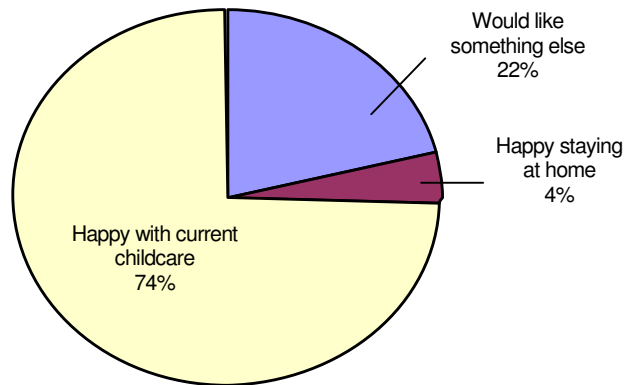


Figure 3 indicates that three-quarters of the parents accessing formal childcare who were consulted indicated that they were happy with their current childcare arrangements, although one-quarter did state that they would like to adopt alternative childcare arrangements.

5.6 Barriers to childcare

Parents were requested to provide details on whether they had ever experienced 'barriers' to accessing registered childcare provision. Figure 5 shows that in terms of the *total reporting* on the existence of barriers, 70% of feedback concerned the issue of cost/childcare fees.

Figure 4 - Proportion of reported barriers by users of formal childcare

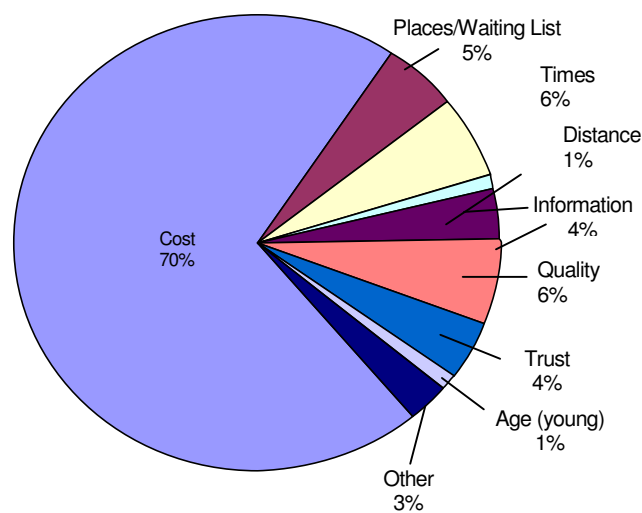


Table 15 highlights variation in terms of how parents, across the Essex locality, with different annual household incomes who are accessing formal childcare view three recurrent 'barriers to childcare': cost; doubts about quality; issues related to 'trust'.

Table 15 - Recurrent barriers linked to household income

Annual Household Income Bracket	% of parents (who responded to barriers question) in income bracket highlighting:		
	Fees too high as a barrier	Doubts about quality as a barrier	Lack of trust as a barrier
Under £10,000	57%	6%	8.5%
£10,000 - £19,000	45%	15%	22.5%
£20,000 - £29,000	45%	15%	10%
£30,000 - £39,000	58%	5%	8%
£40,000 - £59,000	10%	25%	10%
£60,000 - £100,000	27%	20%	9%
Over £100,000	9%	18%	9%

Table 15 highlights that parents whose annual household income is between £30,000 - £39,000 most frequently highlight the issue of fees (being too high) as preventing them accessing a type of childcare of their choice, as opposed to 'lower income parents/families' or 'higher income parents/families' (who evidently place the issue of (doubts about quality) as a more frequent barrier to them accessing their preferred type of childcare).

Figure 5 details barriers which parents, across the Essex locality (area), who are currently accessing formal childcare reported they had experienced if/when they had attempted to change the type of formal childcare that they were accessing:

Figure 5 - Barriers to those wanting to take-up different childcare arrangements

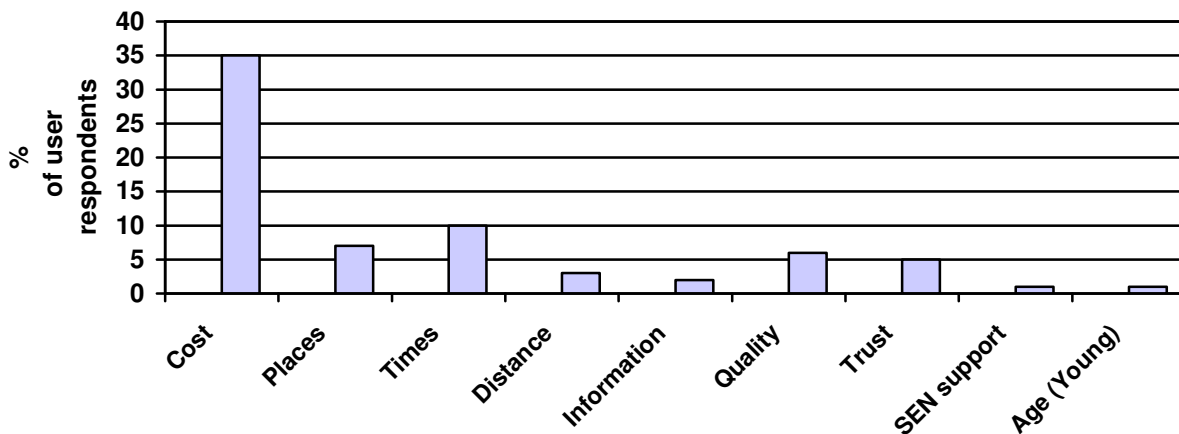


Figure 5 indicates that childcare fees/the cost of the alternative type of childcare was the most frequent barrier experienced by those parents who wished to change the type of formal childcare that they were accessing. 34% of users of formal childcare who were consulted stated that they had experienced this issue/problem.

6 Demand for childcare - Non-users of childcare in Essex

6.1 Parental demand research survey

760 parents (of children aged 0 - 17 years), who were resident within the geographical boundaries of the twelve Essex County Council district areas responded to the research during the period November 2007- February 2008.

These parents *would* have had a child or children who *only* accessed one of the following non-registered forms of support:

- Nanny
- Au-pair
- Parent and toddler group (or a One o'clock Club)
- Crèche (if less than 2 hours/day)
- Grandparents
- Other family members
- Friends/neighbours

6.3 Details on respondents

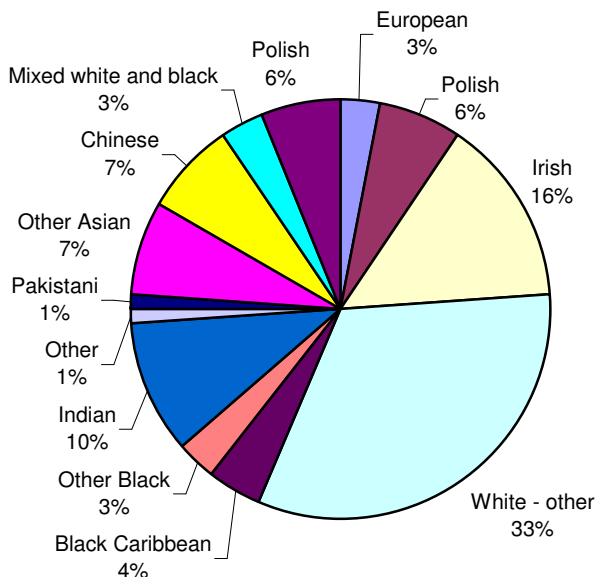
Table 16 below indicates the number of returned questionnaires/ interviews which Coda Consultants and Essex County Council agreed, in November 2007, would be completed with parents who were not accessing formal childcare - i.e. who are 'non-users of childcare'.

A 100% response rate was achieved.

Table 16 - Numbers of responses achieved in each of the twelve district areas with non-users of formal childcare

District	Number of Responses
Basildon	100
Braintree	80
Brentwood	40
Castle Point	50
Chelmsford	90
Colchester	95
Epping Forest	70
Harlow	45
Maldon	35
Rochford	45
Tendring	70
Uttlesford	40
Total	760

Figure 6 - ethnicity of the parents who participated in the survey throughout the twelve Essex County Council area districts



83% of the parents who responded to the survey stated that they were married - a lower percentage than parents who reported that they were users of formal childcare. 17% stated that they were lone parents. 1.5% of the parents stated that they were aged under 20 years.

Circumstances of parents and (any) partner

Table 17 highlights the classification that parents, who were non-users of formal childcare across the Essex locality, believed *best* described their socio-economic circumstances.

Table 17 - Parent’s socio-economic circumstances

Socio-economic circumstances	% of parents who choose the (one) classification
Home looking after child(ren)	48.5%
Maternity/paternity leave	9%
Full-time employment	13%
Part-time employment	26%
Full-time student	1%
Part-time student	1%
Not given	1.5%

Parents who were non-users of formal childcare most frequently stated that the classification: home looking after their children best described their socio-economic circumstances - 41% of parents. 26% of parents stated that they were in part-time employment. 2% of parents were studying.

Table 18 (below) indicates that when a partner was present they were most frequently in full-time employment.

Table 18 - Any partner's socio-economic circumstances

Socio-economic circumstances	% of parents with an applicable partner
Full-time employment	93%
Part-time employment	3%
Student	1%
Not working	2.5%
Not applicable	1.5%

Parental income

Parents who were non-users of formal childcare across Essex were given an option to indicate the level of their total *annual* household income (before tax).

Table 19 - Indication of Annual Household Income

Annual Household Income (before tax)	% of parents
Under £10,000	13%
£10,000 - £19,000	10%
£20,000 - £29,000	15%
£30,000 - £39,000	17%
£40,000 - £59,000	18%
£60,000 - £100,000	7.5%
Over £100,000	3%
No response (chosen)	16.5%

Table 19 indicates that (as with users of childcare), the most frequent annual household income of the non-users of formal childcare in Essex who were consulted for the research was between £40,000 - £59,000/annum, followed in frequency by £30,000 - £39,000/annum.

Children with special needs

Table 20 outlines the number of children, who were cared for by one of the 760 parents consulted throughout the county, who had three specific types of disability and who were *not* by definition accessing a type of formal childcare.

Table 20 - Number of children with a type of special need/disability

No. of children being raised by the 760 parents surveyed	No. of children with a speech and language difficulty	No. of children with a physical disability	No. of children with a learning difficulty
1,223	16	19	24

The table indicates that of the 1,223 children that the total 760 parents surveyed were raising, 4.8% of children had a special need or a disability: most frequently a learning difficulty.

6.3 Current usage of childcare

Figure 7 details the types of informal childcare that particular proportions of parents who are not accessing formal childcare were accessing.

Figure 7 - Informal childcare use by non-users of childcare

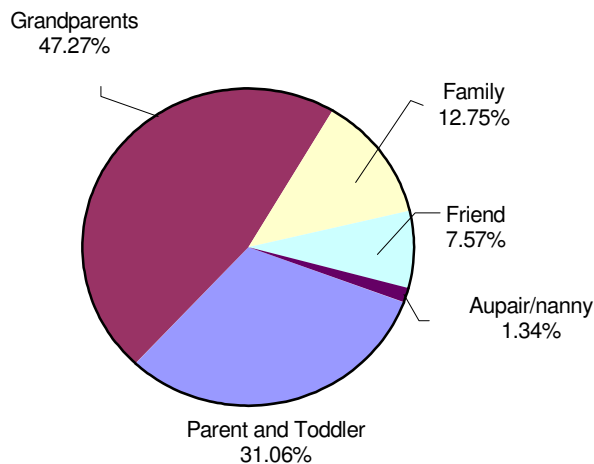


Figure 7 indicates that support from grandparents is the most frequent type of informal childcare, throughout the Essex locality, being accessed by those parents who are not accessing formal childcare (i.e. 'non-users'), followed in frequency by them attending a parent and toddler group.

Table 21 indicates the percentage of parents - who were not using formal childcare - who stated in Table 21 that they would *ideally* like to use an alternative form of childcare, and who specified a particular type of formal childcare across each of the district areas.

Table 21 - Percentage of 'non-users' specifying an *ideal* form of registered childcare

District	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Nursery Class	Children's Centre	Child-minder	After School Club	Holiday Play-scheme	Breakfast Club
Basildon	24%	8%	2%	4%	4%	6%	0	6%
Braintree	25%	14%	4%	0	0	2.5%	1%	7.5%
Brentwood	15%	10%	0	0	12.5%	2.5%	5%	0
Castle Point	18%	4%	0	2%	0.	2%	0	2%
Chelmsford	23%	18%	2%	0	4%	7%	8%	8%
Colchester	17%	16%	4%	1%	5%	21%	11.5%	9.5%
Epping Forest	14%	30%	0	0	10%	0	0	0
Harlow	20%	24%	9%	9%	4.5%	4.5%	7%	9%
Maldon	28.5%	8.5%	3%	0	8.5%	14%	6%	6%
Rochford	9%	13%	2%	0	0	7%	0	2%
Tendring	20%	23%	6%	0	3%	4%	0	0
Uttlesford	12.5%	12.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	25%	5%	10%

Table 21 indicates a relatively high demand for accessing a particular type of formal early years childcare and/or out of school childcare among those parents who are not currently doing so in the Harlow and Colchester districts.

6.4 Barriers to childcare

Parents were requested to provide details on whether they had ever experienced 'barriers' to accessing registered childcare provision.

Figure 8 (opposite) shows that in terms of the *total reporting* on the existence of barriers, by non-users of childcare, 41% of feedback concerned the issue of cost/childcare fees.

Figure 8 - Barriers to childcare (Non-user of childcare)

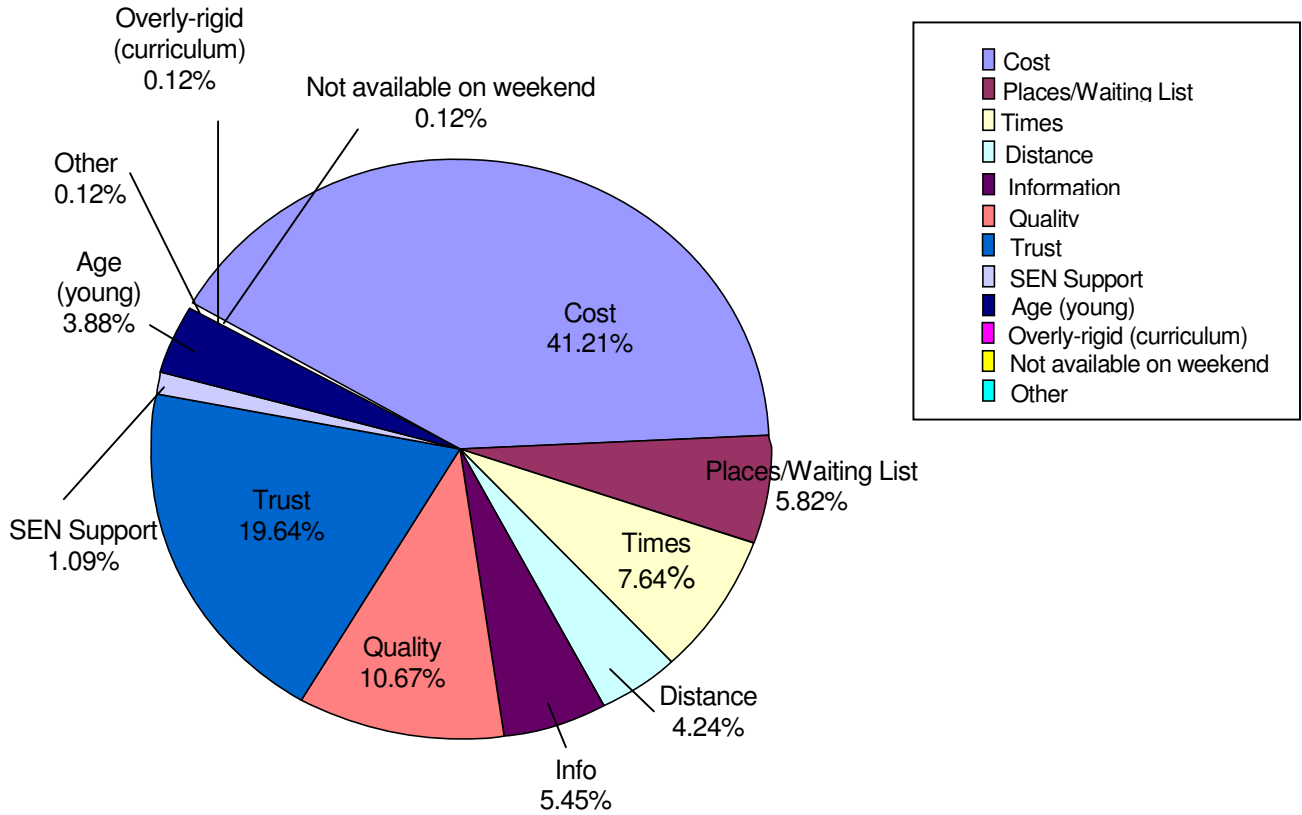


Table 22 indicates certain types of barriers to childcare that non-users from specific annual household income bands reported that they had - at some point - experienced.

Table 22 - Types of barriers to childcare that non-users from specific annual household income bands reported that they had, at some point, experienced

Type of barrier	Annual Household Income						
	< 10k	10-19k	20-29k	30-39k	40-59k	60-100k	>100k
High fees	33%	51%	52%	45%	37%	38%	28%
Long waiting lists	7%	5%	3%	4%	9%	6%	9%
Inconvenient times	4.5%	5%	10%	6%	9%	10%	14%
Quality	8%	5%	10%	11%	12%	16%	9%
Trust	24%	18%	17%	19%	20.5%	19%	18%

7 Demand for childcare - Focus groups with hard to reach parents

The following key findings are representative of the thirteen focus groups.

7.1 Awareness of childcare

Participants at the focus groups generally had an awareness of a range of different types of childcare provision, for 0-14 year olds. They also evidenced an awareness of the Ofsted registration requirement and the need for CRB checks on staff employed by childcare providers.

7.2 Perceived benefits of childcare

Participants highlighted benefits of (their) children attending formal childcare. Social development was repeatedly cited as benefit:

'My child went to pre-school... which was good for her social development'.

'My child has the chance to interact with other children which I believe will help raise his confidence. I am from Zimbabwe and I appreciate him learning a new language, and having new experiences'.

An additional repeated benefit of formal childcare was that it enabled parents to work or to study.

7.3 Information on childcare

A lack of information on where to find local childcare was highlighted as an issue by a number of parents. An outcome of a number of meetings was that parents indicated a minimal awareness of the Essex Children's Information Service (CIS) brand, although some parents were aware that they could *'get lists from the council'*.

Common means of finding out about local childcare options and availability were the CIS, leaflets, the Childcare Link (web-site), (statutory and voluntary sector) outreach workers and 'word of mouth' from other parents. Certain parents also evidently valued a local Health Visitor as key contact for information about childcare.

7.4 Preferred childcare options

Parents tended to prefer a day care setting to a registered childminder. There was a perception that nurseries offered a *'wider range'* of (more) stimulating activities than childminders.

However, there was a demonstrable awareness that childminders go through the Ofsted registration process and a number of parents stated that they would access a childminder *if* they had a greater understanding of what they could offer:

'I would like to know more about what childminders do, particularly from an early education perspective'.

A number of parents described positive experiences of using a childminder. Other parents believed that nurseries offer more flexible hours and that childminders *'take a lot of holidays'*, which impacts on the *'consistency of care'*.

A number of parents stated that they would, *'automatically'* use family and friends because of trust issues or the fact they, themselves were working shift hours.

7.5 Awareness of the Nursery Education Fund

The majority of parents were aware of the availability of NEF places and many were accessing or had accessed free entitlement places.

7.6 Flexibility of childcare provision

Opening and closing times of childcare providers were an issue for a number of parents. They often suggested that local nurseries should *ideally* open at 7.30am in order for them to get to work on time. 6.00pm closures were evidently too tight for many to finish work and get to the setting in time to collect their children:

'6.00pm [closure] is awkward... 7.00pm would be a better time to end the nursery day.'

The availability of childcare for shift working parents was expressed as a need by several parents:

'I have to use informal childcare as I work shift hours.'

'I do not work a standard eight hour day. My shifts vary from 5.00am onwards and I sometimes finish a shift late at night.'

Finally, a number of parents believed that their employer needed to be more flexible with regard to their employee's childcare responsibilities.

7.7 Barriers to childcare

(High) childcare fees were repeatedly cited as a barrier by the majority of parents, as was difficulties in trusting providers.

Parents generally had an awareness of help with fees, through the tax credit system. However, a number of parents believed that it was still not worth their while going to work in order to, in effect, pay for childcare:

'If you get the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit it may be worthwhile depending on what you earn.'

'It's complicated to claim tax credits and all for £30.00 a month... it is hardly worth the trouble.'

A number of parents highlighted their awareness of (well publicised) problems with the tax credit system, which had necessitated parents repaying 'over payments':

'Sometimes it feels that the tax benefit system is designed to actually stop people claiming.'

The issue of trust was the other repeated barrier to using childcare highlighted by parents *1. A number of parents described being 'wary' of employing a childminder because it would be 'someone we do not know' caring for their child. However it should be noted that a number of parents had employed a childminder and valued this type of childcare provision:

'My son had a really good childminder a little while ago. We paid £4.00/hour and she provided a good level of care... I was really happy.'

Several parents stated that they were interested in finding out more about childminders and that they would consider using them.

Finally, a number of parents cited (long) waiting lists as a barrier:

'I think a lot of parents experience the problem of long waiting lists. I waited two years before I got a place at my local nursery.'

'My child was on a waiting list for a long time... it seems good nurseries will always have long waiting lists'

8 Priorities for Essex

Having conducted the research in relation to childcare supply and demand there are some key priorities for action which Essex County Council will need to ensure are addressed over the next three years. Working with partner agencies, Essex County Council will ensure that these action points form the basis of our plans to improve access to sufficient, good quality and appropriate childcare for all families across the county.

8.1 Supply and demand

- The supply and take up of places information will continue to be updated by development staff on a termly basis through the District Sufficiency Working Groups
- Start up funding will be available through the Early Years and Childcare Grants Panel for childcare providers creating new places to address supply shortages
- Development staff will have a targeted approach to supporting settings where take up is low and identifying opportunities for expansion and diversification in popular settings
- Childcare sufficiency information will be used to access developer contributions to expand or create childcare places to meet the needs created by housing developments
- Information
- Increase the awareness of the Family Information Service and the support it can offer in identifying appropriate childcare
- Increase knowledge of childcare options via partner organisations and Children's Centres
- Increase the awareness of childcare funding support opportunities, particularly the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit

8.2 Addressing barriers to accessing childcare

- Support parents to access funding to support childcare through Children's Centres and Family Information Service
- Increase the take up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit
- Support childcare providers to provide affordable and accessible childcare
- District Sufficiency Working Groups will interrogate further the data collected to increase their understanding of local barriers and identify strategies to address them

9 District Profiles

9.1 District Profile - Basildon

Basildon is a predominantly urban district in South Essex. It is Essex's largest district in population terms. Around 98% of the district's 166,000 residents are concentrated in Basildon's three primary population centres: Basildon, Billericay and Wickford. Compared to Essex and national averages, Basildon is a relatively young community - just over 1 in 5 residents are children and fewer local residents are aged over 65.

Basildon district saw a period of accelerated population growth in the 1950s. The population of the district more than doubled in the twenty years between 1951 and 1971. The district population has grown more slowly over the past twenty years (8%) and expected to grow more slowly in future.

Basildon is the manufacturing centre of South Essex and accounts for nearly a quarter of the manufacturing output of Essex. 18% of jobs in Basildon are in the manufacturing industry compared to only 11% nationally. Incomes are higher than seen across the region and across the nation as a whole, unemployment is lower and rates of business start-up are high.

Basildon is some 30 miles from central London and is linked via a direct line to Fenchurch Street Station. Some 18,000 residents - 25% of the district's working age population commute to London for work.

Basildon district is among Essex's (and indeed the East of England's) most deprived areas, mainly because of concentrated deprivation within the town of Basildon itself. Across the district as a whole, however, deprivation levels mirror those seen nationally - almost 1 in 4 children live in poverty.

The district faces a number of challenges. Compared to Essex and national averages, educational achievements are low – fewer young people in Basildon achieve 5 GCSEs at A* - C than in comparator areas. There is also a skills deficit among the adult population, only 16.7% of the working-age population hold higher-level qualifications. This is much lower than across the East (24.8%) and England as a whole (26.5%).

Basildon also has a high rate of teenage pregnancies and local authority housing quality is poor.

9.1.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 23 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	977	1127	649	482	430	320
Take-up of Places	808	1046	500	364	256	200

In order to gain the views of parents in the Basildon District on childcare issues, 100 childcare users and 70 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

9.1.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was pre-school groups (60% of the respondents) with day nurseries used by a similar percentage of the respondents – just over half of the families. Childminders were used by nearly one third of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by just over 40% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by a similar percentage.

Demand for alternative or additional care

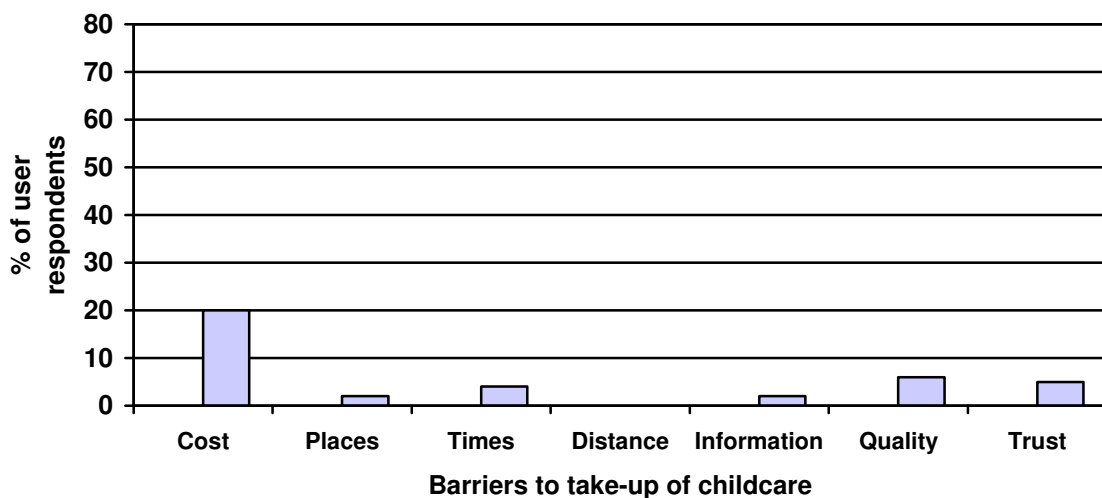
It was found that 75% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 20% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 5% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were pre-school groups, followed by day nurseries and childminders.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 100 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 20% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 9 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.1.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with just over 40% getting help from grandparents, 46% from other family and 17% from friends.

Demand for childcare

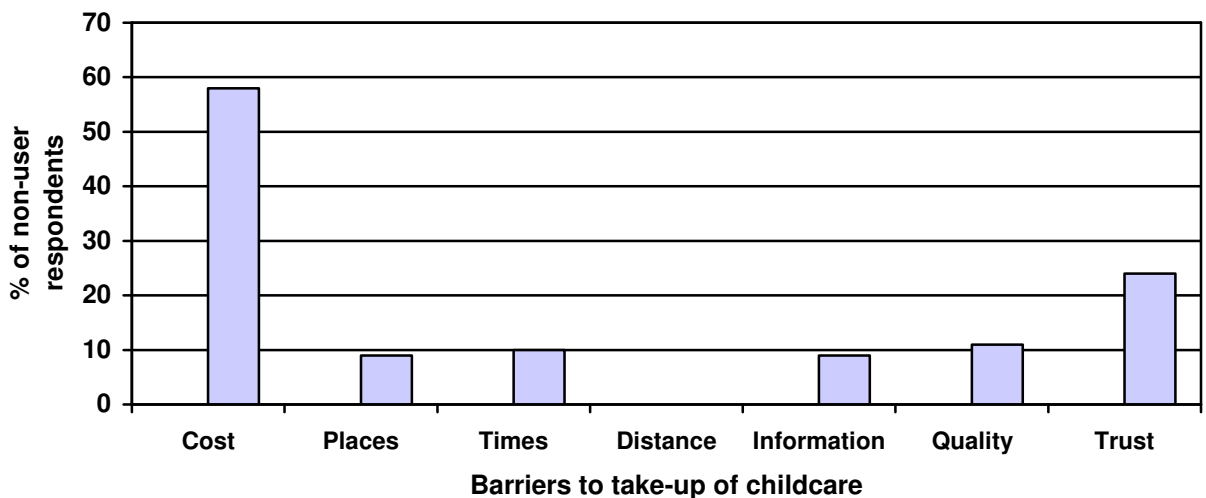
Just over 20% of the 70 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery
2. Child minder
3. Pre-school
4. Wrap around care
5. Holiday playscheme
6. Children's Centre
7. Breakfast club

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 70 non-childcare users in the Basildon district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns around trusting the childcare providers, and the flexibility of opening hours were also expressed by a small number of respondents.

Figure 10 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.2 District Profile - Braintree

Braintree is a large rural district in the North of Essex. It is one of Essex's larger districts in population terms. Around 42% of the district's 137,800 residents are scattered across the small villages and hamlets, while the remaining 58% are concentrated either in the district's principal market of Braintree, or in the smaller market towns of Witham and Halstead.

The district's population profile is broadly in line with that of Essex and the East of England region - just over one in five people are children and just over one in five are over 65. The local population is not ethnically diverse - the largest ethnic minority populations are Asian and these make up only one in one hundred people. Relative to the rest of Essex, and indeed the UK as a whole, the district population has grown quickly over the past 20 years. It is expected to grow more quickly in the future.

Braintree has strong manufacturing and construction sectors. These account for a far greater proportion of local employment than across the region and nation as a whole. The district therefore has correspondingly low levels of employment in business services sectors. Local jobs are more likely to be in trade, administrative and secretarial occupations than across the region, incomes are lower than regional averages and unemployment is slightly higher.

Braintree is a residential district rather than a business district. The number of local jobs per worker is relatively low. Some 28,500 residents – 43% of the working age population - commute out of the district to work. Chelmsford and London are the primary destinations with each receiving some 10% of Braintree's working population.

Overall, Braintree is a prosperous area. There are no large concentrations of deprivation (although a small number of neighbourhoods in Braintree Town have been identified as requiring targeted intervention under Essex's LAA). Health in the district is good and levels of violent crime and teenage pregnancy are lower than national averages. However, the quality of social rented housing is considered to be below the national average.

9.2.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 24 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast Club	After-school	Holiday
Total Places Available	873	729	467	216	236	172
Take-up of Places	729	608	304	157	155	98

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Braintree District on childcare issues, 80 childcare users and 56 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

9.2.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was Pre-school (29% of the respondents), with day nurseries used by a similar percentage of the respondents – one quarter of the families. Childminders were used by nearly one third of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by nearly 40% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by 10%.

Demand for alternative or additional care

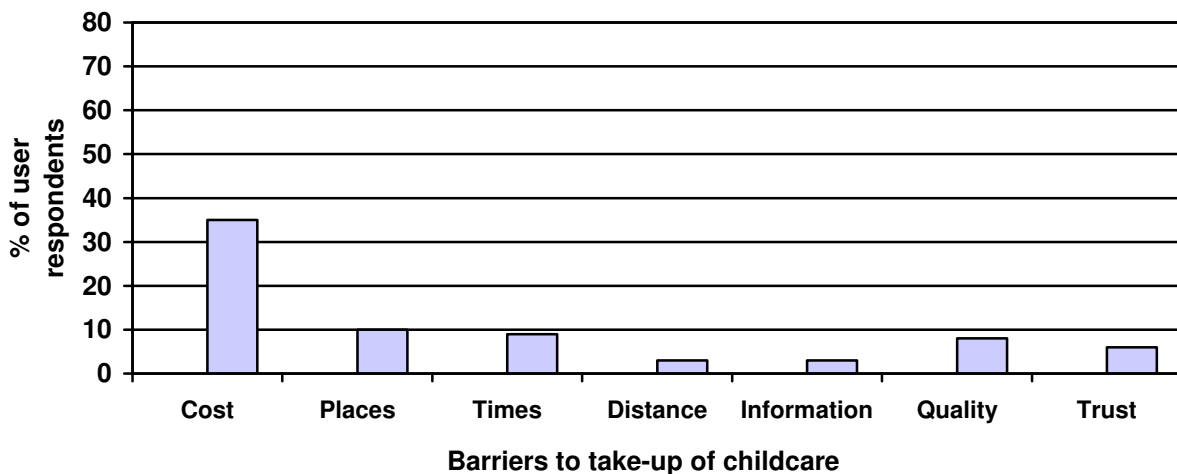
It was found that 72% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 21% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 6% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent type that the current users wanted to access was Pre-school playgroups, followed by day nurseries and childminders.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 80 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 35% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned much less frequently.

Figure 11 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.2.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with 84% getting help from grandparents, 30% from other parent or partner, 21% from other family and 15% from friends.

Demand for childcare

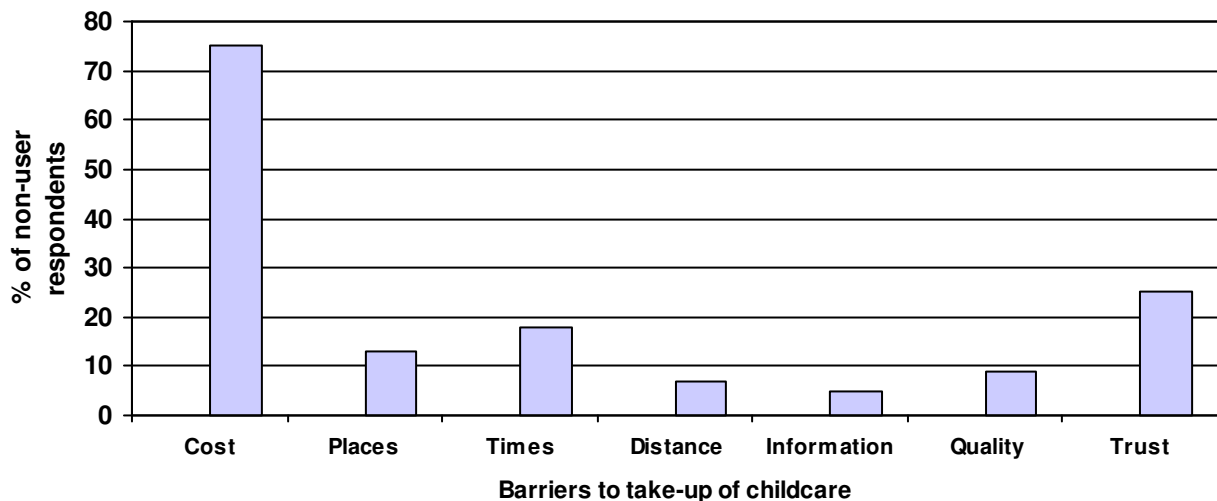
26% of the 56 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery
2. Pre-school
3. Childminder
4. Nursery class
5. Holiday playscheme
6. Breakfast club

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 56 non-childcare users in the Braintree district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however concerns around trusting the childcare providers were also expressed by one quarter of them. The inability to access a suitable childcare place because of a waiting list, or because it did not offer sufficiently flexible times were reasons given by a smaller percentage of the parents.

Figure 12 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.3 Borough Profile - Brentwood

Brentwood is a small green-belt borough situated in the South of Essex and sharing a border with Greater London. It is one of Essex's smallest boroughs in population terms. Around 30% of the borough's population is dispersed across small villages and settlements while the remaining 70% are concentrated in urban areas. The majority live in Brentwood Town (the district's principal town) and the smaller town of Ingatestone.

Overall, Brentwood's population is older than average for the East of England: one in five are children, and one in five are over 65. The local population, is not particularly ethnically diverse, in line with Essex averages – only one in twenty are from BME groups.

Brentwood saw a period of accelerated population growth in the middle of the twentieth century. The population of the district more than doubled in the twenty years between 1951 and 1971. Since 1971 the Brentwood population has fallen slightly although further growth is forecast for the future (albeit at a low level).

Employment within the Borough is concentrated within the service sector. The Borough also has a large construction sector employing more than 7% of local workers - more than at the regional level (5.2%) and nationally (4.6%). Unemployment within the Borough is very low and salaries are higher than regional and national averages. This reflects the fact that Brentwood is one of Essex's higher skilled areas – one-third of residents hold degree level qualifications compared to a quarter at regional and national level, and 57% of workers are in professional or managerial jobs (15% more than the national average).

Despite this apparently strong local economy, more people commute out of Brentwood than commute in. London is the primary destination with 36% of employed residents commuting to the capital.

Brentwood has neither large concentrations of deprivation nor pockets of significant need. Local housing is of a high standard. Educational achievement is high. Violent crime is rare and the incidence of teenage pregnancy is low. The borough is one of the healthiest in England and life expectancy is high. However, there are issues with local inequality - residents of the healthiest wards can expect to live five years longer than those in the least healthy.

9.3.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 25 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After-school	Holiday
Total Places Available	649	635	389	127	139	622
Take-up of Places	559	586	309	92	108	421

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Brentwood District on childcare issues, 31 childcare users and 40 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

9.3.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was Pre-school (61% of the respondents), with day nurseries used by nearly 40% of the respondents.. Childminders were used by nearly 40% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by nearly 90% of the user respondents to help look after their children.

Demand for alternative or additional care

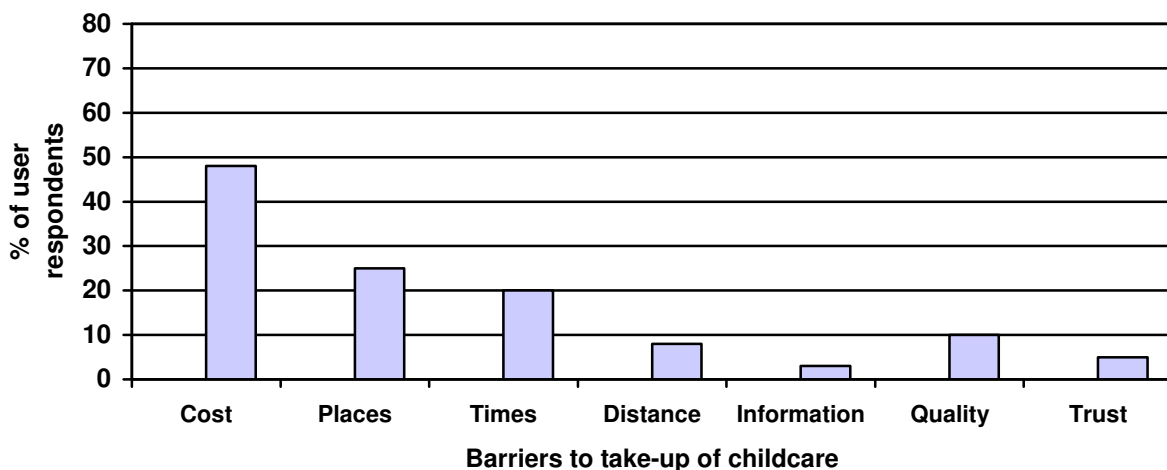
It was found that 60% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 40% wanted to use alternative childcare.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent type that the current users wanted to access was Pre-school playgroups, followed by wrap-around care and childminders, and then holiday clubs.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 31 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for nearly half of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently but included availability of places, flexibility of opening times, and concerns over quality of care.

Figure 13 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.3.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The 40 non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with 63% getting help from grandparents, 28% from other family and 15% from friends.

Demand for childcare

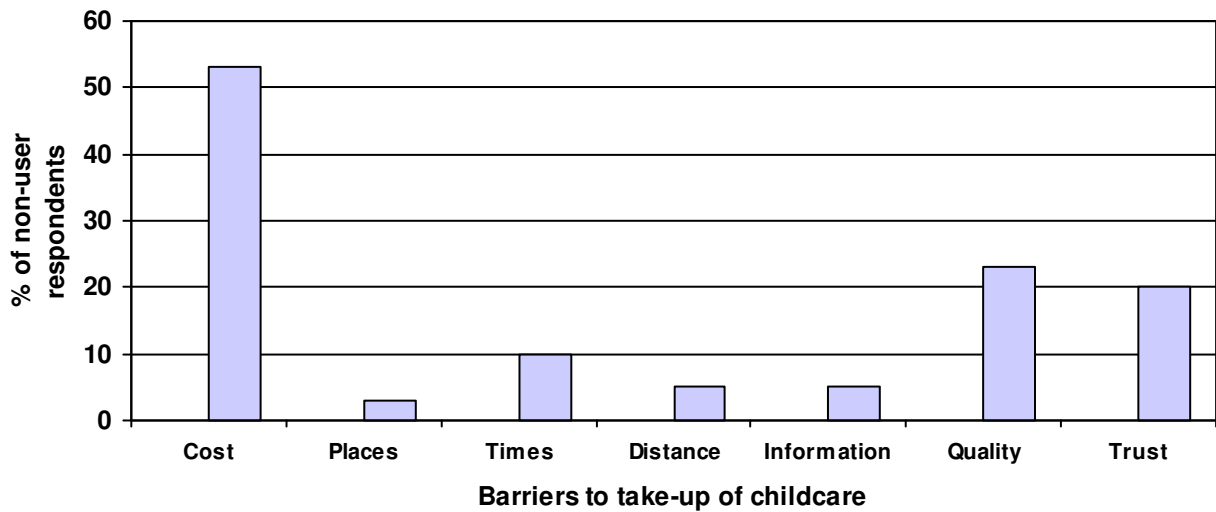
27% of the 40 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery
2. Pre-school
3. Childminder
4. Holiday playscheme
5. After school club
6. Wrap around care

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 40 non-childcare users in the Brentwood district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however concerns around trusting the childcare providers and quality were also expressed by one quarter of them. The inability to access a suitable childcare place because of a waiting list, or because it did not offer sufficiently flexible times were reasons given by a smaller percentage of the parents.

Figure 14 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.4 District Profile – Castle Point

Castle Point is a predominantly urban borough situated in South Essex on the Thames Estuary. Some 99% of the Borough's 86,000 strong population live in the urban areas of Benfleet, Thundersley and Canvey Island. The urban areas in Castle Point continue to the East and into neighbouring Southend UA. Compared to regional and national averages, Castle Point is a relatively old community - 1 in 4 people are over 65 and only 1 in 6 are children. The local population is less ethnically diverse than Essex as a whole - only 1 in 33 people identifies with a BME group.

Castle Point saw a period of accelerated population growth between 1950 and 1970. The population of the borough more than doubled in this period. The borough population continued to grow quickly in the 1970s but has slowed in the past 25 years. Moderate levels of growth are forecast for the next ten years.

The lack of local quality employment has resulted in high levels of out commuting. Some 60% of the population work outside the borough with London, Basildon and Southend being the primary destinations, respectively accounting for 20%, 15% and 13% of employed local residents. Within Castle Point the Borough Council is the largest local employer.

Those who work in Castle Point tend to receive lower salaries than the regional and national average, are more likely to work part-time. They tend to be employed in low skilled jobs. This reflects the fact that Castle Point has a low skilled labour force – only 8% of the local population have degree level qualifications, the national average is 27%.

There are no large concentrations of multiple deprivation in Castle Point, (although two neighbourhoods have been selected for targeted interventions under Essex's local area agreement). Across the borough as a whole deprivation levels are lower than across England – only 1 in 7 children live in low income households. Local health is good and the quality of local authority housing and support for older people is good too. There are low levels of violent crime and teenage pregnancy.

There are some particular local challenges however. As with many areas across Essex, attainment at GCSE is below the national average. Road safety is also a local issue.

9.4.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 26 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	576	545	273	267	225	282
Take-up of Places	498	497	209	182	181	169

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Castle Point District on childcare issues, 50 childcare users and 50 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

9.4.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was pre-school groups (52% of the respondents) with day nurseries used by one third of the families. Childminders were used by 10% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare such as after school clubs, holiday playschemes and Children's Centres used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by just over 40% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by a similar percentage.

Demand for alternative or additional care

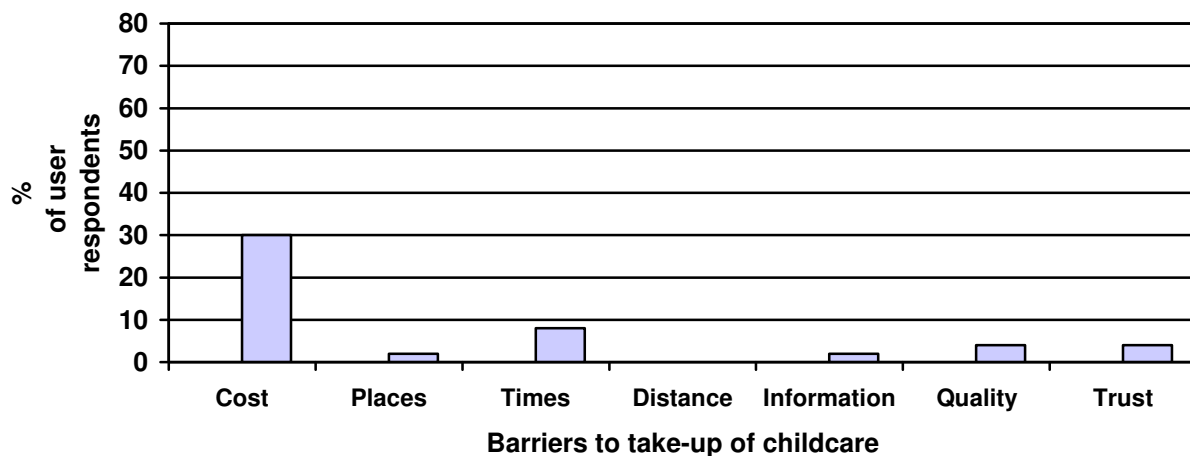
It was found that 52% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 40% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 8% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were pre-school groups, followed by day nurseries and then childminders.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 50 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 30% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 15 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.4.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with just over 56% getting help from grandparents, 26% from other family and 4% from friends.

Demand for childcare

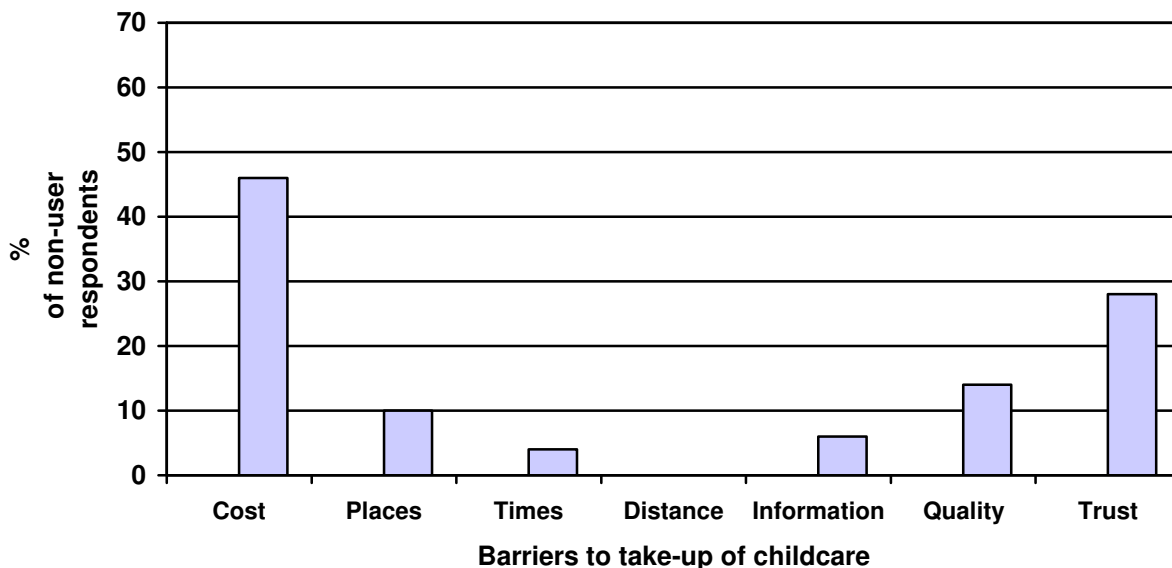
Just over 20% of the 50 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery
2. Pre-school
3. Wrap around care
4. Children's Centre
5. Holiday Playscheme
6. Breakfast club
7. Childminder

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 50 non-childcare users in the Castle Point district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns particularly around trusting the childcare providers and quality were also expressed by a small number of respondents.

Figure 16 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.5 Borough Profile - Chelmsford

Chelmsford is located in the heart of Essex and is one of the county's largest districts in population terms. The borough itself is centred on the town of Chelmsford but also covers the town's large rural hinterland. Around three-quarters of the borough's 161,100 strong population live in urban areas, and more than four out of five live in the town of Chelmsford itself. The remaining 24% are dispersed throughout the rural and semi-rural parishes.

The population profile of Chelmsford is skewed towards those of working age. Children under 16 account for less than one in five residents, as do over-65s. Local ethnic diversity is in line with county averages.

Chelmsford's population grew quickly in the 1950s, and although recent decades have seen lower rates of local growth, the local population continues to grow relatively quickly – it has increased by more than 10% in the past 20 years. Growth is expected to slow somewhat in future, falling below national averages over the next 25 years.

Chelmsford is a prosperous borough – it is in the top 10% of wealthiest communities in England. A higher proportion of people are economically active than at regional and national level, more are in work or are self employed. Local unemployment rates are half the national average. Local residents are more likely to work in managerial or professional occupations and less likely to have low skills jobs. This reflects the fact that Chelmsford is one of Essex's higher skilled areas – some 32% of working-age residents hold degree level qualifications – well above national and regional averages. Incomes are high and benefit claimant rates are low.

Although many people commute into Chelmsford to work – many from neighbouring Essex districts and boroughs – almost as many local residents out-commute. Despite its role as one of the county and region's economic centres, many think of it as a borough base around a dormitory town. London is the primary destination with 42% of all out-commuters heading for the capital. These commuting volumes place strain on local road and rail links.

There are no large concentrations of multiple deprivation in Chelmsford (although one neighbourhood in North West Chelmsford has been selected for targeted interventions under Essex's local area agreement). Compared to England as a whole, GCSE achievement is high, teenage pregnancy and violent crime are low.

9.5.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 27 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	1939	1157	965	492	447	361
Take-up of Places	1678	887	818	335	312	217

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Chelmsford District on childcare issues, 90 childcare users and 55 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

9.5.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was childminders (54% of the respondents). Day nurseries were used by approximately 40% of the parents who were surveyed, as were pre-school groups. Nursery classes were used by nearly 10%, and breakfast clubs and after-school clubs by a lower percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by just over 50% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by just under 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by a similar percentage.

Demand for alternative or additional care

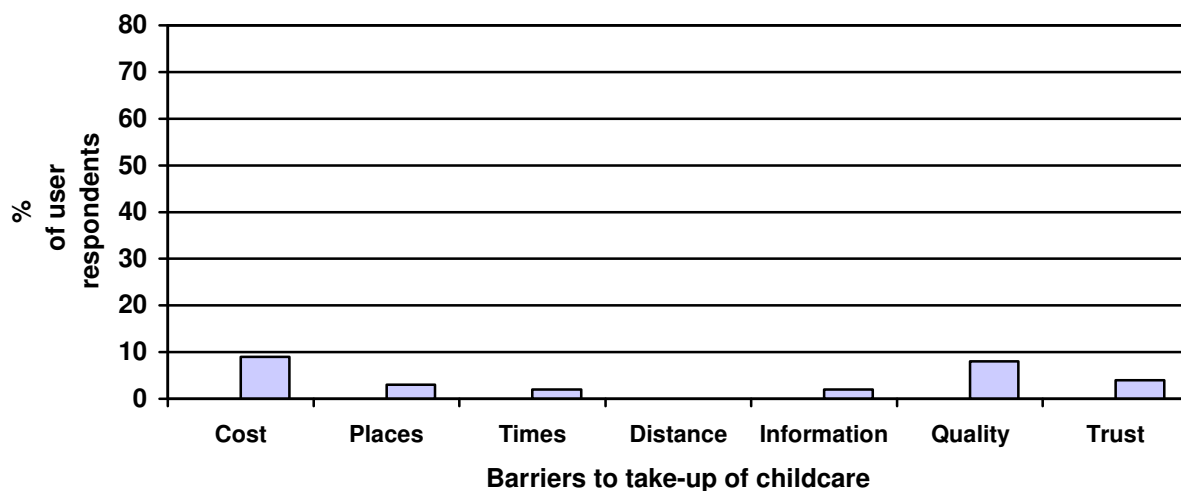
It was found that nearly 80% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 18% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 3% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were after-school clubs and childminders, followed by day nurseries.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 90 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 9% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned even less frequently.

Figure 17 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.5.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made use of informal childcare, with 35% getting help from grandparents, 9% from other family and 8% from friends.

Demand for childcare

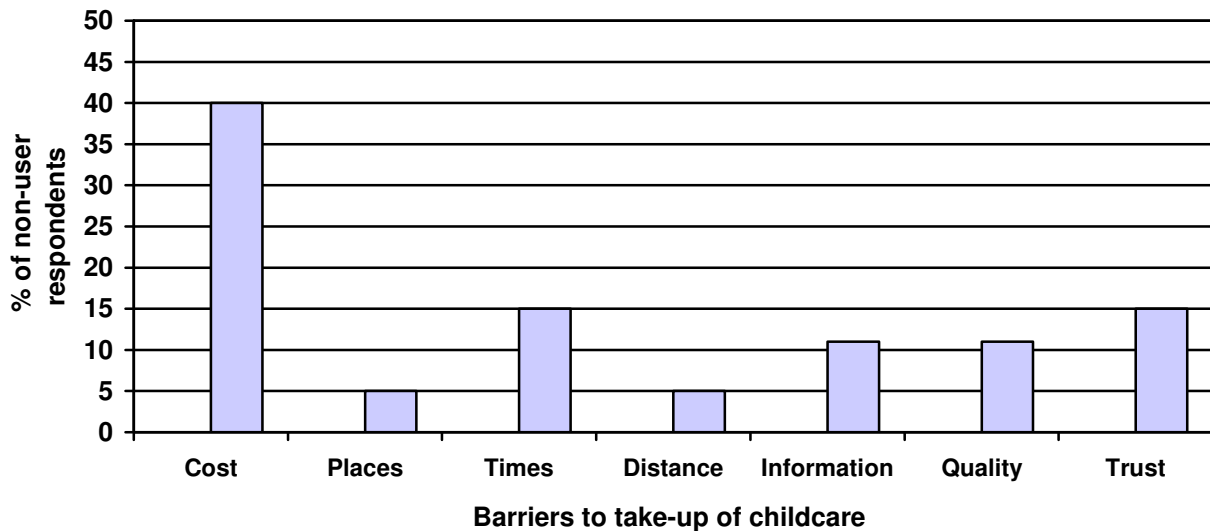
30% of the 55 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery
2. Pre-school
3. Child minder/ wrap around care
4. Holiday playscheme
5. Nursery class
6. Breakfast club

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 55 non-childcare users in the Chelmsford district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns around trusting the childcare providers, and the flexibility of opening hours were also expressed by a small number of respondents.

Figure 18 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.6 Borough Profile - Colchester

Colchester is located in north east of Essex and is the county's second largest borough in population terms. The borough itself is centred on the town of Colchester but also covers the town's large rural hinterland. Around 67% of the borough's 163,400 strong population live in urban areas, and more than nine out of ten of these urban dwellers live in the town of Colchester itself. The remaining 33% are dispersed throughout the rural and semi-rural parishes.

The population profile of Colchester is skewed towards those of working age. Children under-16 account for less than one in five residents as do over-65s. Local ethnic diversity is in line with county averages – BME groups make up around 5% of the borough population.

Colchester's population has grown faster than in many neighbouring districts since the 1970s. Forecasts suggest that population will continue to grow at a rate above national averages. Indeed the borough has been awarded growth point funds to support sustainable development, including the accelerating house building programmes.

Colchester is relatively prosperous, but faces a number of challenges. Levels of economic participation are in line with national and regional averages with levels of employment – and particularly self-employment – significantly greater. Unemployment is correspondingly low. Local residents are more likely to work in customer service or personal service roles (particularly in the public sector, retail or hospitality industry) and this is reflected in incomes below the regional average. This perhaps also reflects the borough's low skills base – over one-fifth of the working-age has no qualifications at all (7% higher than across the East). Ironically, Colchester's Wivenhoe Park is home to Essex's largest higher education institution – the University of Essex.

Colchester has no large concentrations of multiple deprivation, although many areas of Colchester Town are being targeted under Essex's local area agreement. Compared to England, Colchester has high attainment at GCSE, and relatively few teenage pregnancies. The borough has low levels of violent crime, and a high proportion of older people are supported in their own homes. Local health is generally good.

9.6.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 28 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	1492	995	729	391	299	328
Take-up of Places	1282	958	565	269	210	246

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Colchester District on childcare issues, 95 childcare users and 93 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

9.6.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was day nursery (23% of the respondents) with pre-school used by 15% of the families. Childminders were used by 10% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare such as after school clubs, holiday playschemes and Children's Centres used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by nearly half of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by nearly 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by a similar percentage.

Demand for alternative or additional care

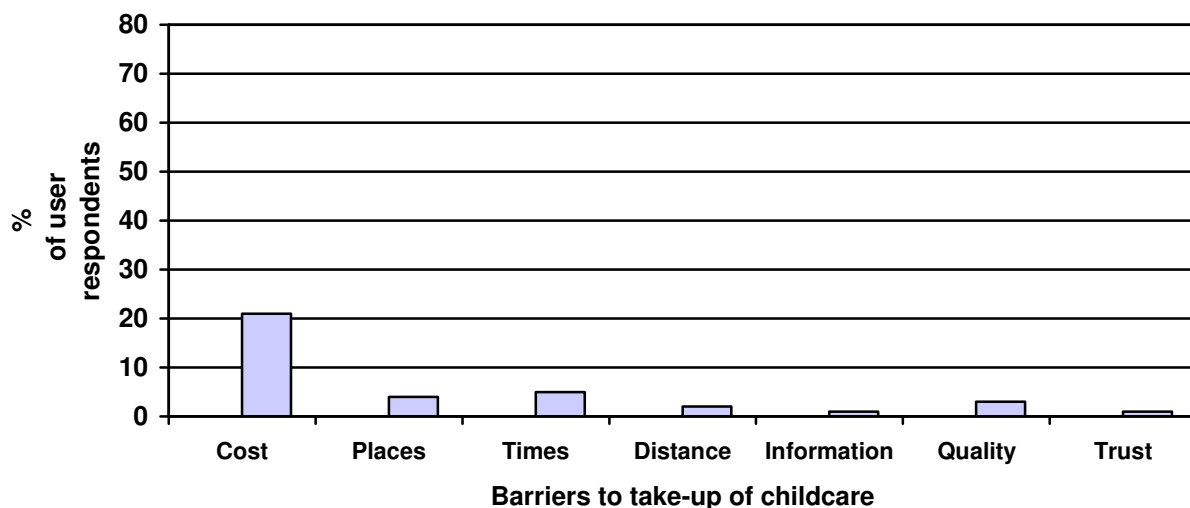
It was found that just over 80% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements; however the remaining 19% wanted to use alternative childcare.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were day nursery provision, followed by pre-school, then holiday playschemes, and wrap-around care. There was little interest expressed in child-minder provision or breakfast clubs by this group.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 95 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for approximately one fifth of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 19 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



9.6.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The 93 non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with 35% getting help from grandparents, 9% from other family and 8% from friends.

Demand for childcare

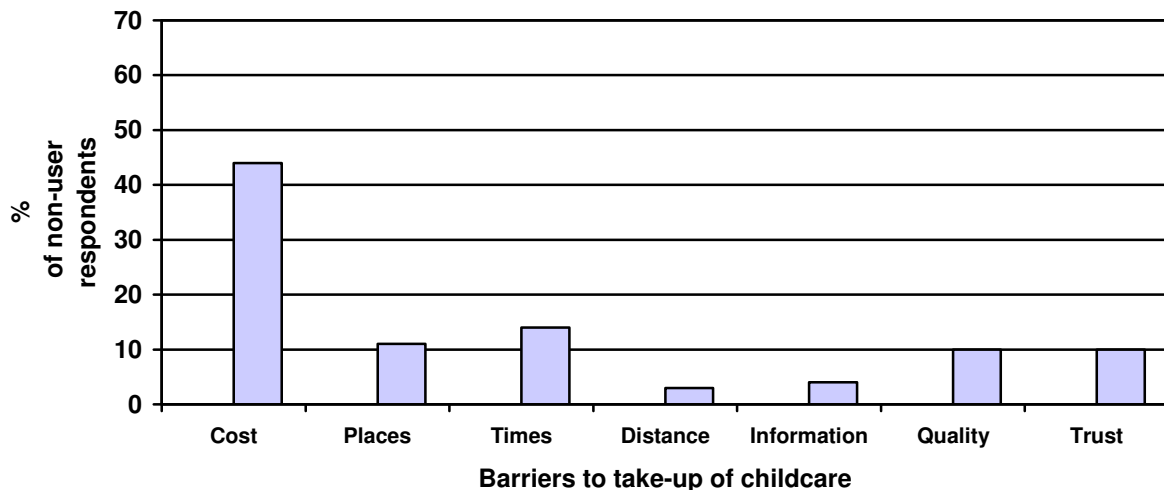
Just over 50% of the non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery
2. Pre-school
3. Wrap around care
4. Holiday Playschemes
5. Childminder
6. Nursery class
7. Breakfast club

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 93 non-childcare users in the Colchester district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns particularly around flexibility of opening hours, trusting the childcare providers and quality were also expressed by a smaller number of respondents.

Figure 20 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.7 District Profile – Epping Forest

Epping Forest District is located in south west Essex on the county's border with Greater London. Around 65% of the district's 121,000 population live in urban areas – mainly in the south of the district (Waltham Abbey, Loughton and Epping). The remaining 35% of the population live in rural areas in the north and east of the district. The district's rural population live predominantly in small settlements dotted across the metropolitan greenbelt.

The population has grown little over the last 20 years and is expected to grow in line with national averages over the next twenty years. The current population profile is also in line with national statistics. One in five people are children, and around one in five is aged over-65. Epping Forest is Essex's most ethnically diverse district – around 9% of residents are from BME groups, almost double the Essex average.

Epping Forest's close proximity to London, together with the continuation of the London Underground Central Line into the districts' main population centres, makes it easy for local residents to commute into London - 45% of local workers do this every day. This, at least in part, fuels relative prosperity in the district. Levels of economic activity, and employment are higher than regional and national averages. So too are incomes.

There are, however, a number of economic challenges. A low proportion of working-age residents have degree level qualifications and more than average have no qualifications at all. Although more workers than average are employed in high skilled, senior positions, the labour supply is polarised – more than average work in low skilled jobs.

On average, Epping Forest is healthier than England and has avoided large concentrations of multiple deprivation (some small deprived areas are, however, being targeted through Essex's local area agreement). Compared to England as a whole, local authority housing quality is good, violent crime is relatively rare and a high proportion of the elderly are supported at home. Teenage pregnancy rates are low, and local health levels are good.

8.7.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 29 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	968	1040	533	184	230	310
Take-up of Places	942	903	527	136	207	287

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Epping District on childcare issues, 70 childcare users and 27 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

8.7.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was Pre-school (51% of the respondents), with day nurseries used by one third of the families. Childminders were used by nearly one quarter of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by nearly 50% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by nearly 10% of the parents, as were with friends

Demand for alternative or additional care

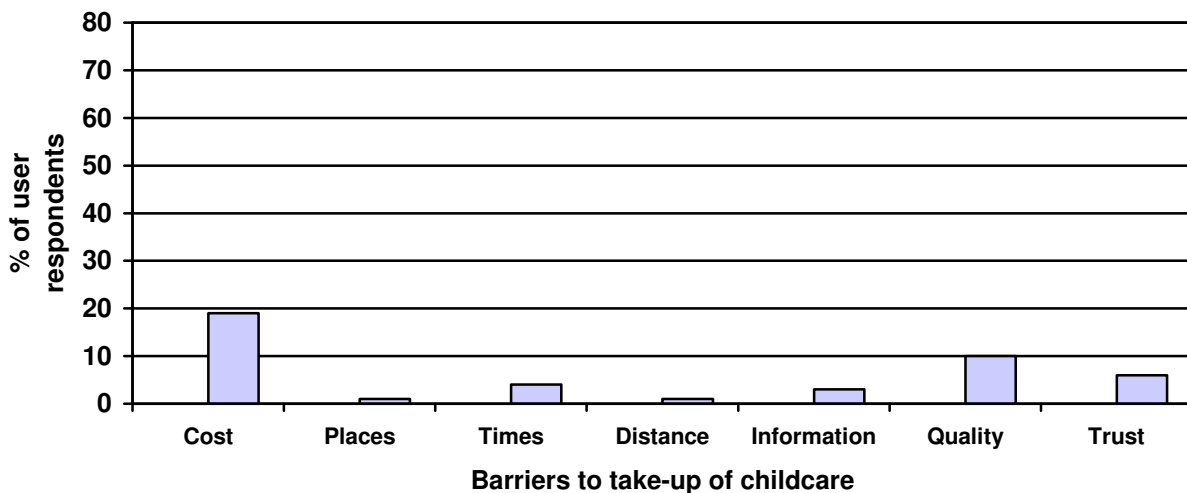
It was found that 74% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 19% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 7% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were Pre-school playgroups and day nurseries, then childminders.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 70 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 19% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently, however doubts about quality did emerge as a significant concern for 10% of the parents.

Figure 21 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.7.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The 27 non-users from the survey made some use of informal childcare, with 37% getting help from grandparents and 4% from family.

Demand for childcare

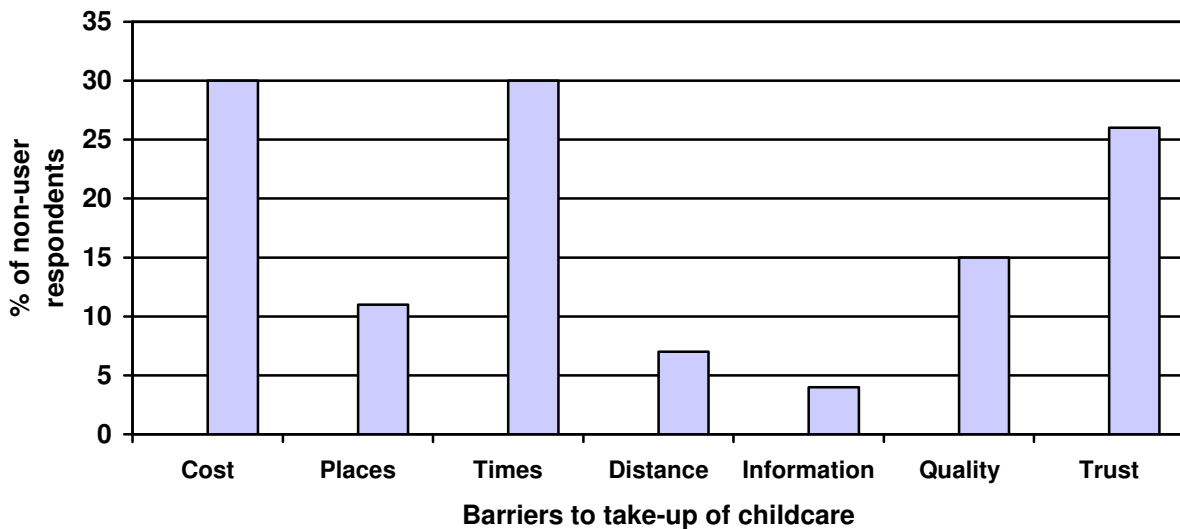
45% of the 27 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Pre-school
2. Day nursery
3. Child minder
4. Wrap-around care
5. Holiday playscheme

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 27 non-childcare users in the Epping district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare and the flexibility of opening hours were the most common reason given for not using it, however concerns around trusting the childcare providers were also expressed by one quarter of them.

Figure 22 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.8 District Profile - Harlow

Harlow is a completely urban district in the west of Essex. The district follows (approximately) the boundary of Harlow town – a post-war new town built to support the mass movement of people out of London following the Second World War. Harlow will be celebrating its 60th anniversary during 2007. The district is home to 80,000 people.

Relative to the East of England, the Harlow population is relatively young: over 1 in 5 are children, only 1 in 6 are over the age of 65. It is one of Essex's most ethnically diverse districts with 8% of the local population identifying with BME groups.

The town saw massive population growth across the 1950s and 1960s. The population of the town increased to almost 125 times its original size. Population growth slowed through the 1970s and since 1981 the population of Harlow has been in decline.

Levels of economic activity in Harlow are high and employment rates are well above the national average. However, fewer people are self-employed in Harlow and unemployment is almost double the average for the East of England. Where people are in work they are more likely to be in manufacturing industry and more likely to be in low skilled jobs. Local incomes are correspondingly low. This perhaps reflects the fact that local skills levels are low – fewer than average high degree level qualifications and a higher proportion have no qualifications at all.

In February 2006 the Council announced that it had won nearly £10m of funding from the government to spend on a business innovation centre and on improving some of Harlow's neighbourhoods. Four locations have been identified for renewal: Clifton Hatch, Old Harlow, Prentice Place and Staple Tye.

Harlow is, together with Basildon and Tendring, one of Essex's most deprived districts. Although there are few large concentrations of multiple disadvantage in Harlow, there are a number of areas targeted for intervention under Essex's local area agreement. Compared to the England average, benefit claims are frequent, and despite problems with poor quality physical infrastructure across the district, local authority housing quality is good. Educational achievement at GCSE and teenage pregnancy rates are average.

8.8.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 30 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After-school	Holiday
Total Places Available	659	551	576	155	272	248
Take-up of Places	539	519	429	78	168	138

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Harlow District on childcare issues, 45 childcare users and 36 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

8.8.1 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was day nursery (69% of the respondents), with pre-schools used by 38% of the respondents. Childminders were used by nearly 20% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by 40% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by 13% of the parents, with friends also being used by just over 10%..

Demand for alternative or additional care

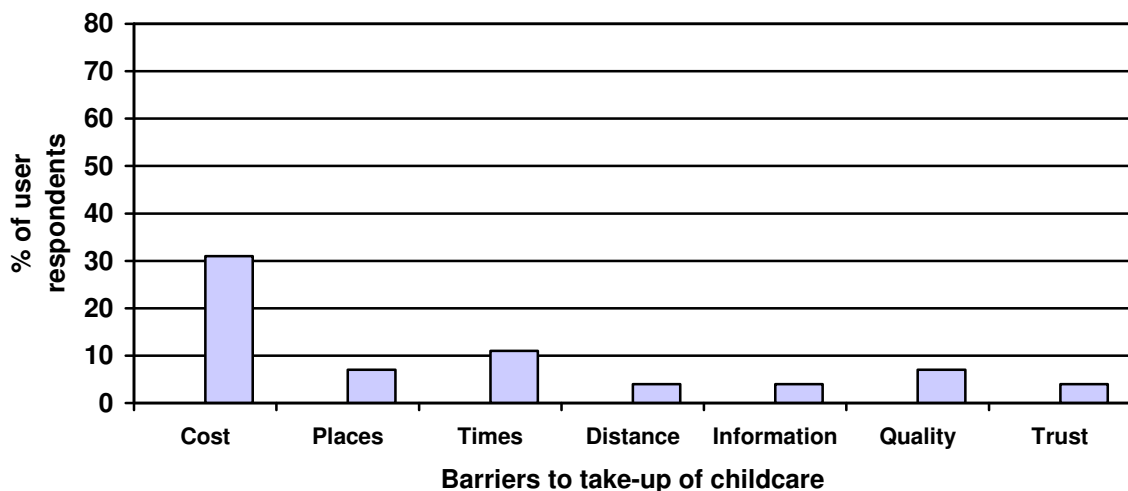
It was found that 64% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however just over 30% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 4% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were pre-school groups, followed by day nurseries.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 45 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for just over 30% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 23 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.8.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made some use of informal childcare, with nearly one quarter of the survey respondents getting help from grandparents, 9% from other family and 9% from friends.

Demand for childcare

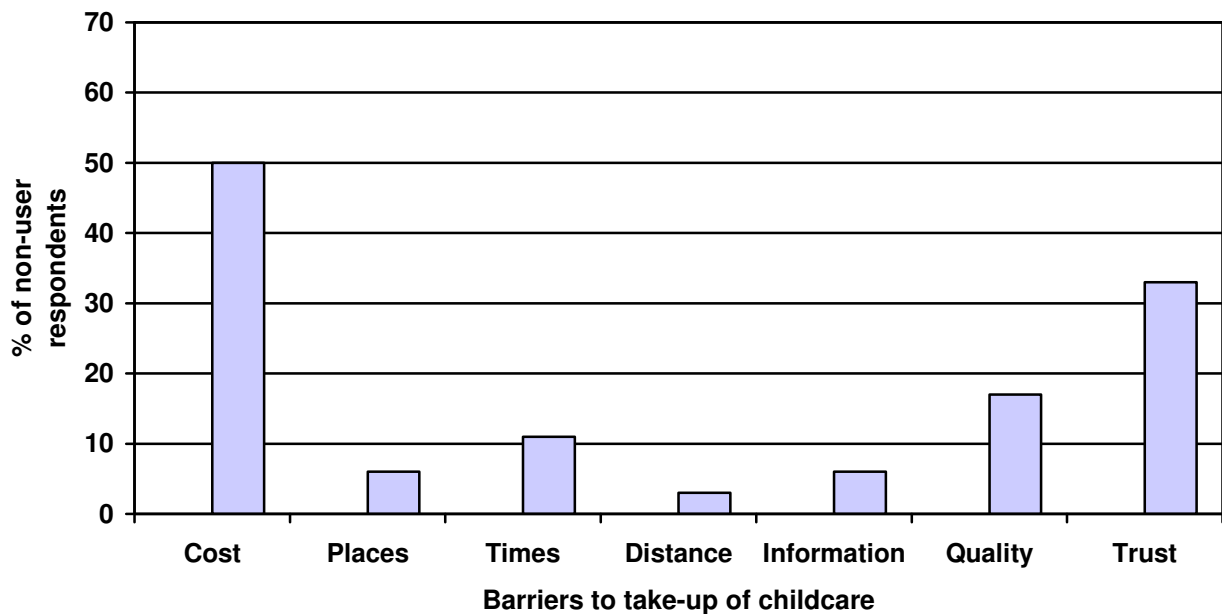
Nearly 50% of the 36 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Pre-school
2. Day nursery
3. Child minder
4. Children's Centre
5. Nursery class
6. Holiday playscheme
7. Wrap-around care

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 36 non-childcare users in the Harlow district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns around trusting the childcare providers, and the quality of care provided were also expressed by a significant minority of the respondents.

Figure 24 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.9 District Profile - Maldon

Maldon is a coastal district on the East coast of Essex. It is a predominantly rural district and contains a large number of rare habitats. Many sites within the district are designated sites of special scientific interest; others are special conservation areas, ramscar sites and national nature reserves.

Maldon is Essex's smallest district in terms of population. Despite covering some 360 square kilometres, the district is home to some 60,000 people. The vast majority of this population live in small isolated villages and Hamlets (65%) while the remaining 35% live in urban areas – many in the districts largest towns: Maldon, Burnham-on-Crouch and Upminster.

The district has seen above average growth in population over the last twenty years, which is expected to continue over the next twenty. The current population profile is broadly in line with regional averages – one in five people are children, and one in five are over the age of 65. Maldon is one of the least ethnically diverse areas of Essex. The district has only a small ethnic minority population – around 3% of total.

There is a low density of jobs per working age person in Maldon, with just 0.6 jobs per person of working age. As a result, a great many commute out of the district. Despite this shortage of local jobs and significant out commuting, Maldon is a relatively affluent area. Economic activity is high, employment rates are high and levels of self-employment are significantly greater than seen across the region as a whole. The reliance on self-employment is reflected in the strength of the manufacturing and construction sectors, these account for a far greater proportion of jobs than in comparator areas. The effect of high levels of self employment is also seen in local incomes. Despite a significant lack of qualifications among local residents, salaries are substantially higher than in other areas.

Maldon is an affluent rural area and as such it avoids the challenges typically associated with urban deprivation. In a recent "quality of life in the 21st century" survey, the Maldon District was ranked 53rd out of the 376 local authority areas. This placed Maldon in the top 15% of local authority areas for their quality of life.

Challenges remain, however. There is a risk that local skills gaps will be perpetuated - GCSE level is significantly worse than average. The rurality of communities in Maldon also make it difficult for residents to access services and amenities.

8.9.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 31 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	419	669	381	80	114	121
Take-up of Places	366	568	314	61	85	75

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Maldon District on childcare issues, 35 childcare users and 35 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

8.9.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was Pre-school (63% of the respondents), with day nurseries used by 10% of the respondents, and childminders by a similar percentage (12%). Other forms of registered childcare such as holiday play-schemes and after-school clubs were used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by 43% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by one quarter of the parents, however friends and nannys/au pairs were not mentioned.

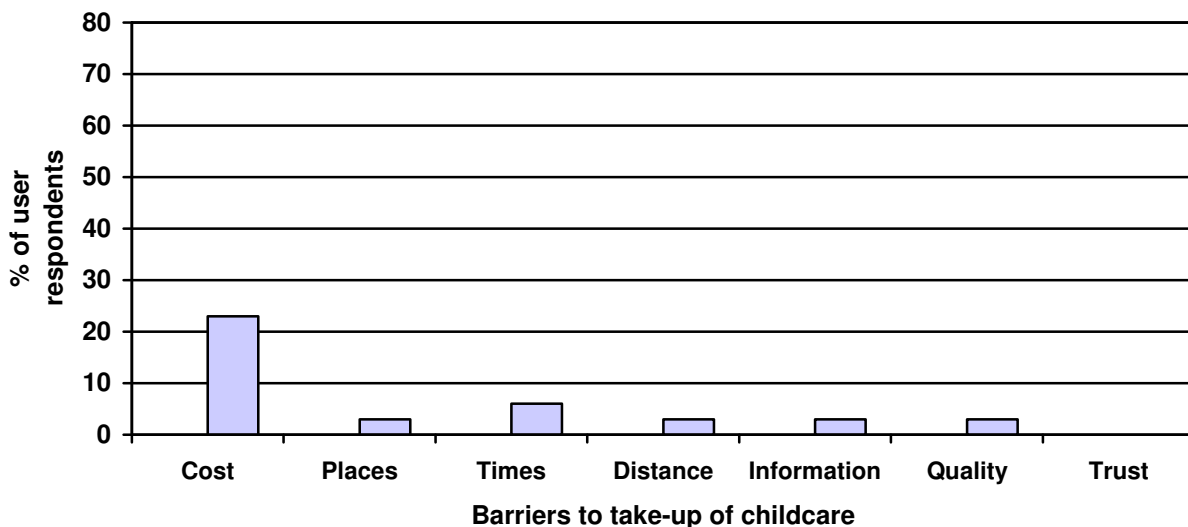
Demand for alternative or additional care

It was found that 80% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 17% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 3% stated that they would prefer to be at home. Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent type that the current users wanted to access was Pre-school playgroups, followed by day nurseries, wrap-around care and breakfast clubs.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 35 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 23% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned much less frequently.

Figure 25 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.9.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with nearly 60% getting help from grandparents, 23% from other family and 14% from friends.

Demand for childcare

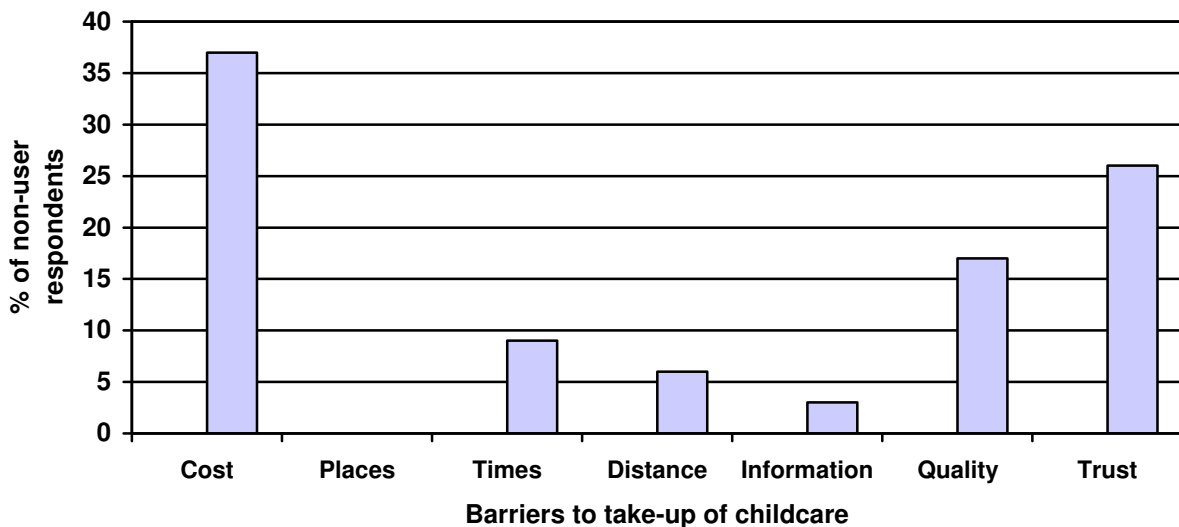
Nearly 60% of the 35 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Day nursery / wrap-around care / Holiday playscheme
2. Breakfast club
3. Pre-school / Child minder / Nursery class

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of non-childcare users in the Maldon district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however concerns around quality of care and trusting the childcare providers were also expressed by significant minority of them. The inability to access a suitable childcare place because of a waiting list, or because it did not offer sufficiently flexible times were reasons given by a smaller percentage of the parents.

Figure 26 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.10 District Profile - Rochford

Rochford is an urban area of 79,000 people in coastal Essex. It shares its borders with the districts of Maldon, Chelmsford, Castle Point, Basildon and the unitary authority of Southend-on-Sea. The district has three main towns, Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. Much of the remaining area is green belt with a large area around Foulness. London Southend Airport straddles between the district's southern boundary with Southend.

Population growth over the last 20 years has been low and growth is expected to be moderate over the next twenty years. In line with the East of England, one in five people are children, and just over one in five are older people. Ethnic minority groups are small with only 1.7% of the population being ethnic minorities. The area is relatively affluent ranking 316 out of 354 most deprived authorities nationally. While there is less poverty than England, about 1 in 9 children in Rochford are living in low income households.

There are limited employment opportunities within the district; only five businesses employ more than 250 staff. Consequently, sixty-eight per cent of the workforce commute out of the area. Of the working population almost 30 per cent work in skilled trades, administrative or secretarial work. This is reflected in the low percentage of residents in Rochford who have no qualifications (7%), but do have alternate qualifications. Unemployment levels are below regional and national averages at just 1 per cent.

8.10.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 32 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	470	622	385	166	210	210
Take-up of Places	386	592	328	90	136	94

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Rochford District on childcare issues, 45 childcare users and 18 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

8.10.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was pre-school groups (64% of the respondents) with day nurseries used by 40% of the families. Childminders were used by nearly 30% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare such as after school clubs and holiday play-schemes used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by just over 50% of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by nearly 10% of the parents, with friends also being used by a small number of the respondents.

Demand for alternative or additional care

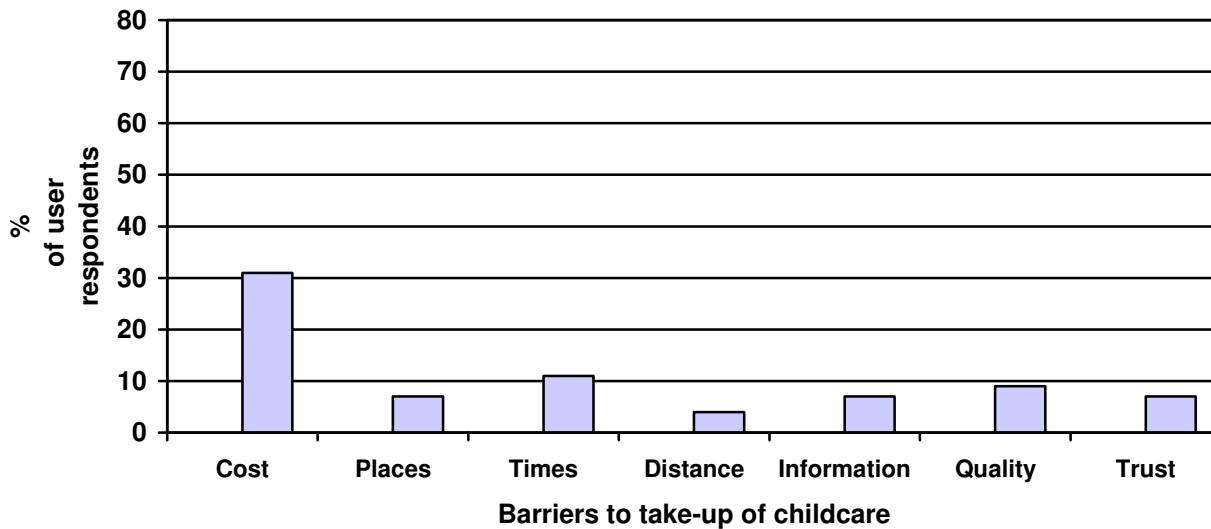
It was found that 62% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 27% wanted to use alternative childcare, and 11% stated that they would prefer to be at home.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were pre-school groups, followed by day nurseries, wrap-around care, then childminders and nursery class.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 45 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for approximately one third of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 27 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.10.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made some use of informal childcare, with 27% getting help from grandparents, nearly 10% from other family and 7% from friends.

Demand for childcare

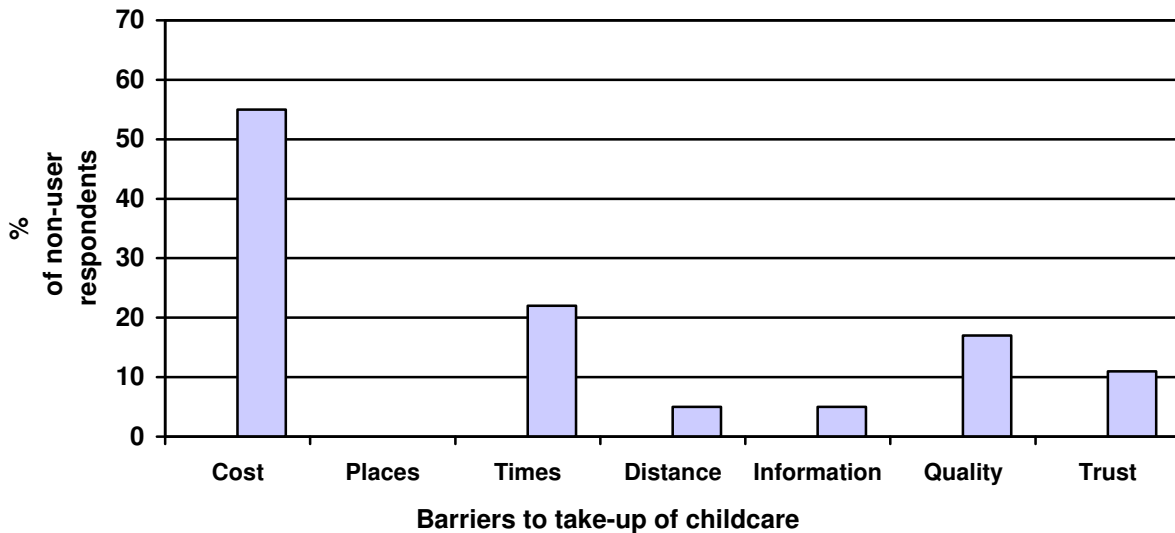
Just over 30% of the 18 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare, with the others being happy to stay at home. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Pre-school
2. Day nursery
3. Wrap around care
4. Holiday Playscheme

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 18 non-childcare users in the Rochford district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns particularly around flexibility of times and quality were also expressed by a small number of respondents.

Figure 28 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.11 District Profile - Tendring

Tendring is a rural area with a population of 142,000, in coastal Essex. It lies in the Tendring peninsula and is situated to the east of Colchester nestling between the two major rivers of the Colne to the southwest and the Stour to the north. The area has a mix of characteristics from the rural area in the North West, to the coastal holiday resorts of Clacton, Frinton, and Walton and to the port of Harwich in the east. Forty per cent of the population reside in Clacton and less than 25 per cent in the rural part.

Tendring's location attracts many tourists to its seaside resort who swell the population during the summer. The population is growing, mainly due to people of retiring age being attracted to the coastal area. This gives the district a higher proportion of elderly residents than the national average and 0.7 per cent is from minority ethnic communities.

Tourism traditionally has been the main employer of the coastal resort towns, with summer visitors swelling the resident population. The current main employment in the area is retailing, business services, education and care services in addition to tourism. The area has a workforce of approximately 56,000 with 31,200 working locally and 25,000 commuting out of the district. Unemployment stands at 3.9 per cent compared with 2 per cent for the region and 3.1 per cent nationally.

8.11.1 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 33 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After school	Holiday
Total Places Available	1055	500	458	452	296	240
Take-up of Places	864	483	306	297	162	146

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Tendring District on childcare issues, 70 childcare users and 40 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

8.11.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was pre-school (48% of the respondents) with day nurseries used by one third of the families. Childminders were used by just under 30% of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare such as nursery class, after school clubs, holiday play-schemes and Children's Centres used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by just over one third of the user respondents to help look after their children. Other family members were used by nearly 10% of the parents; however friends or nannies / au pairs were rarely used.

Demand for alternative or additional care

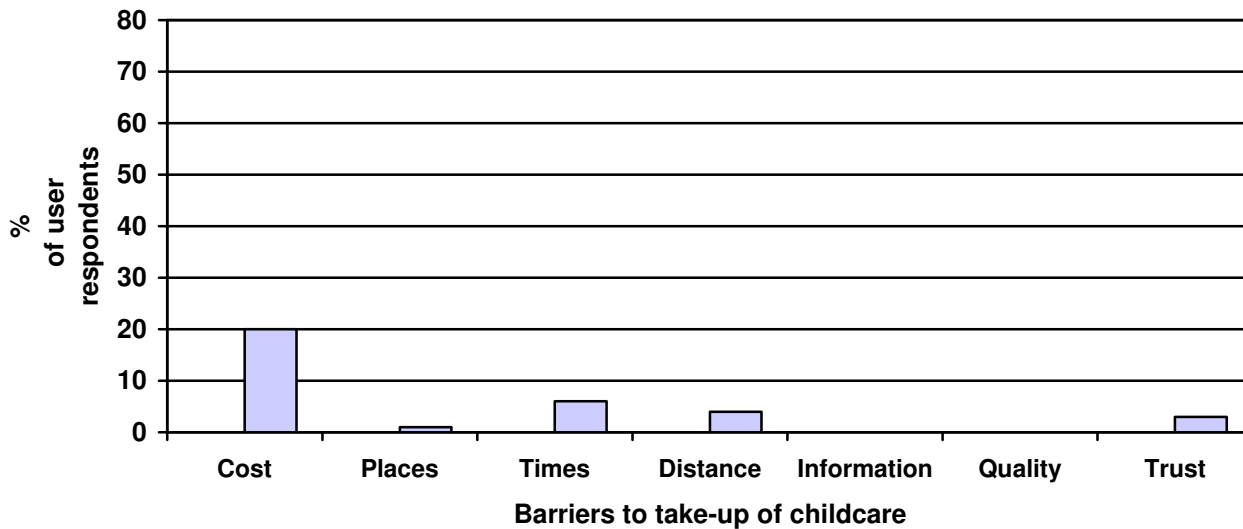
It was found that just over 60% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 27% wanted to use alternative or additional childcare. and 11% preferred to stay at home with the children.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent types that the current users wanted to access were pre-school provision, followed by day nursery care or wrap-around care, then childminders or nursery class..

Barriers to take-up

Among the 70 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for approximately one fifth of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 29 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.11.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The 40 non-users from the survey made some use of informal childcare, with 27% getting help from grandparents, 9% from other family and 7% from friends.

Demand for childcare

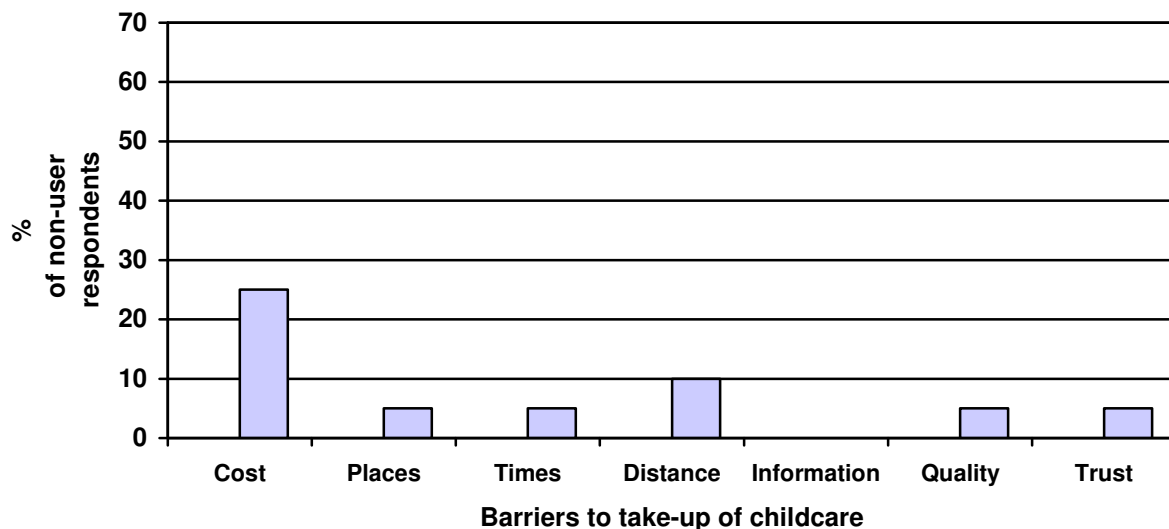
23% of the non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. The remainder were happy to stay at home with the children. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Pre-school
2. Day nursery
3. Wrap around care
4. Holiday Playschemes
5. Childminder
6. Children's Centre
7. Nursery class

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 40 non-childcare users in the Tendring district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns, in particular the distance to the childcare provider, were also expressed by a smaller number of respondents.

Figure 30 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.12 District Profile - Uttlesford

Uttlesford is a rural area of 70,000 people in the northwest corner of Essex. Its largest urban area is Saffron Walden with 14,700 residents. The district has borders with the boroughs/districts of Braintree, Chelmsford, East Hertfordshire, Epping Forest, North Hertfordshire and South Cambridgeshire. The area served by the council is generally sparsely populated and rural in nature, although only an hour's rail journey from central London.

Uttlesford has the second lowest population in Essex at approximately 70,000. The population has grown moderately (10%) over the last 20 years and is projected to grow by a similar amount over the next twenty. The demographic profile of Uttlesford shows that 1 in 5 people are children, and 1 in 5 are older people. Only 3 in 100 are from ethnic minority groups.

In the southwest of Uttlesford lies Stansted Airport, the fastest growing airport in Europe. It currently handles about 24 million passengers per annum and planning permission has been granted for up to 25 million.

The airport is the district's biggest employer and there are thriving industrial estates, particularly in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, as well as a Biotechnology Science Park at Chesterford. Many working residents commute to London or Cambridge and nearby towns; many also work at Stansted Airport.

Unemployment is below average at 0.7 per cent compared with 2.3 per cent for the county of Essex and the national average of 3.1 per cent. Uttlesford DC is one of the least deprived areas of England as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Uttlesford District was also recently voted as one of the most desirable places in England in which to live.

8.12.3 Current supply and take-up of childcare

The following data has been supplied by the district Childcare Sufficiency Working Group. It gives an overview of the current supply and take up of formal childcare provision. A breakdown of formal childcare provision, and take up by type, across each ward can be found in the appendices.

Table 34 - Formal childcare provision and take up by type

	Day Nursery	Pre-school	Childminder	Breakfast	After-school	Holiday
Total Places Available	768	636	278	170	320	108
Take-up of Places	724	594	248	111	239	82

Parental demand for childcare

In order to gain the views of parents in the Uttlesford District on childcare issues, 40 childcare users and 27 non-childcare users completed a short questionnaire which asked about their current use of formal and informal childcare, what childcare, if any, they would prefer, and what factors affected their decision to use childcare.

8.12.2 Current users of childcare

Use of formal childcare

For those who used formal (registered) childcare, the most frequently used type was day nursery (50% of the respondents), with childminders used by a similar percentage of the respondents –45% of the families. Pre-school was used by nearly one third of the survey respondents, with other forms of registered childcare used by a smaller percentage.

Use of informal childcare

Informal childcare such as grandparents, other family and friends, was used by both users and non-users of formal care. It was found that *in addition to formal care*, grandparents were used by one quarter of the user respondents to help look after their children, however other family or friends were rarely used by these respondents.

Demand for alternative or additional care

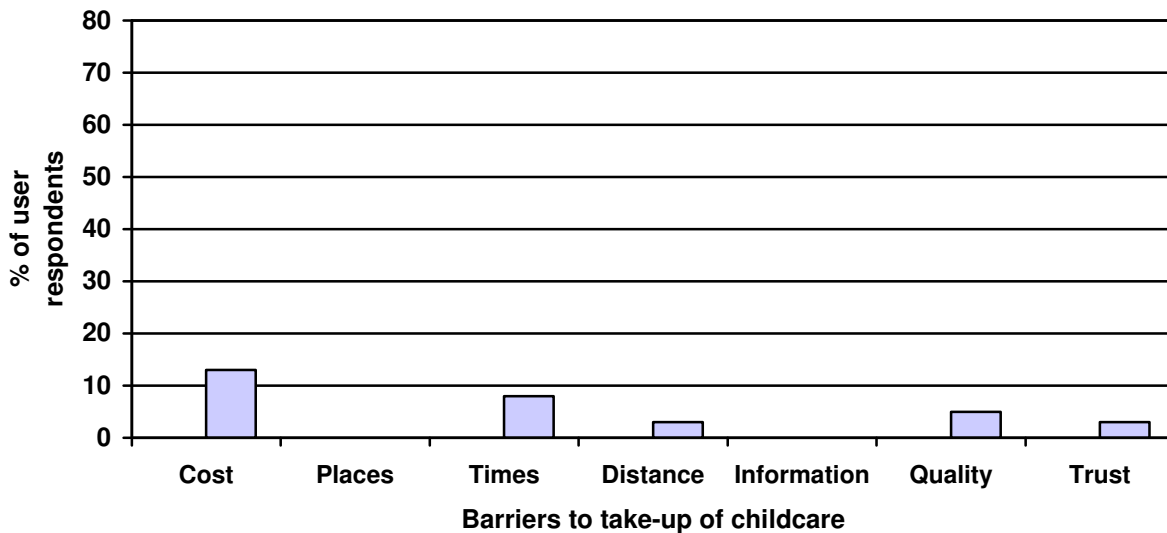
It was found that 75% of the current childcare users who were surveyed were happy with existing arrangements, however 25% wanted to use alternative childcare.

Of those who were seeking alternative or additional childcare, the most frequent type that the current users wanted to access was day nurseries, followed by childminders, then wrap-round care, and pre-school care.

Barriers to take-up

Among the 40 users of formal childcare who were surveyed, the cost of childcare was a barrier to take-up for 13% of them. Other potential barriers were mentioned less frequently.

Figure 31 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



8.12.3 Current non-users of childcare

Use of informal childcare

The non-users from the survey made considerable use of informal childcare, with 65% getting help from grandparents, 23% from other parent or partner, 23% from other family, 23% from friends and 13% from an au pair or nanny.

Demand for childcare

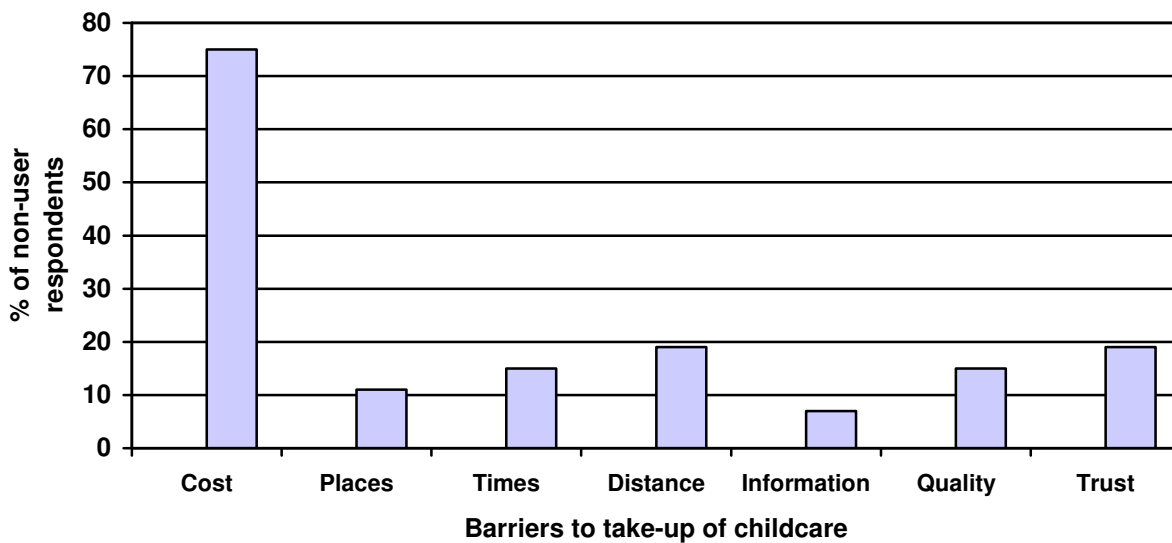
38% of the 27 non-users surveyed stated that they would like to use an alternative form of childcare in addition to or instead of informal childcare. Their preferences in order of priority were as follows:

1. Wrap-round care
2. Pre-school
3. Day nursery
4. Holiday playscheme
5. Child minder
6. Nursery class
7. Children's Centre
8. Breakfast club

Barriers to use of formal childcare

The survey of 27 non-childcare users in the Uttlesford district revealed that the perceived cost of registered childcare was the most common reason given for not using it, however other concerns were also expressed by a small number of the parents.

Figure 32 - Barriers to take-up of childcare



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You can contact us:

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The information contained in this booklet can be made available in alternative formats: large print, Braille, audiotape and disk. We can also translate this information into other languages.

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