



Early Years and Childcare International Evidence Project / October 2003

# Provision of Services

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned researchers at Thomas Coram Research Unit to write five seminar papers in response to a number of policy questions concerning provision of services, child outcomes, quality, the workforce and funding and sustainability in the field of early childhood education and childcare. These papers review cross-national evidence concerning early childhood education and childcare (ECEC) services<sup>1</sup> for children aged from birth to 14 (16 for children with special educational needs)<sup>2</sup>. The papers were written during 2002 and in conjunction with seminars held for policymakers in April 2002. A paper introducing the project and discussing the rationale for cross-national work, and a paper summarising the findings from the review are also part of this series.

### Key Findings

1.2

- Compulsory schooling defines the boundaries of early years and childcare services through the statutory age for starting school, school hours and school holidays. The statutory age for starting school ranges from 4 years in Northern Ireland to 7 years in Sweden (paras. 2.1-2.4).
- Responsibility for services is divided between education and welfare. The school always comes under education, while other services may be the responsibility of either welfare or education. Only Sweden, England and Scotland have placed administrative responsibility for early years, compulsory schooling and childcare within one government department: education<sup>3</sup> (paras. 2.5-2.11).
- There are four main types of provision for children below school age: schools<sup>4</sup>, integrated and age-segregated centres, and family day care (para. 3.1). There is less information available on out-of-school services and this sector is less developed. Where it is more developed, the education system plays an important role. Out-of-school provision is often school-based, but not necessarily school-run (paras. 3.6-3.11).
- Comparable statistics on levels of provision are difficult to find (para. 3.12). Levels of pre-school provision are highest in the Nordic countries, particularly in Denmark and Sweden. In these two countries and Finland, there is an entitlement to provision from at least 12 months old. The English-language countries have no entitlements, except for nursery education in the UK. Other European countries mostly offer entitlement to education for children from 3 years: provision for children under 3 is variable but relatively low (paras. 3.15-3.19).
- Levels of school-age childcare are again highest in Denmark and Sweden, less developed in Norway and particularly low in Finland. Elsewhere, statistics on these services are particularly poor, but levels are probably rather low for most other countries. France, however, has extensive services, as does the former East Germany (paras. 3.21-3.23).
- There is little or no cross-national

<sup>1</sup>Childcare refers to both group and home-based services, but not childcare provided by parents, relatives or friends. In the UK, early childhood education and childcare (ECEC) services would include childminders (family day care providers), pre-schools, day nurseries, nursery classes and nursery schools, reception classes and out-of-school provision. Throughout these papers, ECEC generally refers to services for children below compulsory school age, whilst childcare for children of compulsory school age (i.e. out-of-school services) is usually discussed separately.

<sup>2</sup>Lack of cross-national data in some areas, discussed in each paper where appropriate, may limit the age range covered.

<sup>3</sup>In England, early education and childcare are unified within one unit based at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) although responsibility is shared with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

<sup>4</sup>E.g. nursery classes in UK (England)



work on out-of-school services for older children, (e.g. from the end of primary education), although there is evidence of growing concern for this age group. Denmark seems to offer the clearest policy. The potential or actual contribution of youth, sport and cultural services needs to be better understood (paras. 6.1-6.3).

- There is little evidence of types of provision that may be declining. In Sweden and Denmark, school-based out-of-school services have taken over from other forms (para. 4.2).
- Children are most likely to have a coherent experience in the Nordic countries, due to the way their services are structured (e.g. a high level of entitlement to a place in an age-integrated setting), with school-age childcare integrated into the school and with some coherence of professional approach across different settings (para. 5.1).
- Denmark and Sweden have 'mature childcare markets' (although they would not use the term) i.e. there is sufficient provision for children, at least up to age 10, to meet demand. Key features include high levels of affordable provision, a professionalised workforce and long-term public policy commitment (paras. 8.1-8.8).

### **What are the benefits of cross-national study?**

- 1.3 International evidence introduces the idea of cross-national sharing of experience and practice in areas of common interest, and in a rigorous way that enables account to be taken of national similarities and differences. It opens up more choices and can be a stimulus for policy

learning and innovation. The introductory paper in this series of seminar papers (Moss et al., 2003) provides a fuller discussion.

### **Which countries are included in this study?**

- 1.4 The seminar papers include evidence from 15 countries, which have been grouped according to differences in welfare regime (see Moss et al., 2003).
- Four 'English-language' countries—Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US);
  - Four 'Nordic' countries—Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden;
  - Seven 'Other European' countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.
- 1.5 The study sets out to review international evidence to help answer the policy questions formulated by the DfES, and to identify gaps in the evidence. Although the UK<sup>5</sup> is one of the countries under review, the study does not set out to provide extensive detail on UK policies and practices in all areas covered by these papers.

### **The focus of this paper**

- 1.6 This paper is about the provision of early years and childcare services, and their relationship to compulsory schooling. We consider: type and extent of provision; any barriers to take-up among older, school-age children; provision for children with special education needs; the relationship to wider family support policies; and the attainment of mature childcare markets. Our starting point is the relationship between the four areas of provision:

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise stated the UK refers to England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

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Table 1: Early education and childcare services provision: auspices, school starting age and entitlement

Country + school starting age (i)	Auspices	Places in publicly funded services (ii)	Entitlement
<b>English-language countries</b>			
Australia 6(5)	Federal: Welfare & Education State: Varies	not available	No
New Zealand 6 (5)	0-5: Education 5+: Unclear	not available	No
United Kingdom 5 (NI, 4) (4)	England, Scotland: Education N.I., Wales: Welfare	0-3: low, 3-6: medium/high, 6-10: not available	Legal entitlement part-time education for 3 and 4 year olds
United States 5 to 7: 6 most usual	Federal and State: Welfare & Education	not available	No
<b>Nordic countries</b>			
Denmark 7 (6)	Welfare Education	0-3: high, 3-6: high, 6-10: high	Political commitment to full-time childcare 1-6 years
Finland 7 (6)	Welfare	0-3: medium, 3-6: high, 6-10: low	Legal entitlement full-time childcare 0-7 years
Norway 6	Welfare Education	0-3: medium, 3-6: high, 6-10: not available	No
Sweden 7 (6)	Education	0-3: high, 3-6: high, 6-10: high	Legal entitlement full-time childcare 1-12 years
<b>Other European countries</b>			
Belgium 6	Welfare & Education	0-3: high, 3-6: high, 6-10: not available	No
France 6	Welfare & Education	0-3: medium/high 3-6: high, 6-10: high	No
Germany 6	Federal: welfare State: mainly welfare	0-3: low (West); high (East) 3-6: high 6-10: low (West); high (East)	Legal entitlement part-time kindergarten 3-6 years
Italy 6	Welfare & Education	0-3: low, 3-6: high 6-10: not available	
Netherlands 5 (4)	Welfare & Education	0-3: low/medium, 3-6: medium 6-10: not available	Legal entitlement education for 4 year olds
Portugal 6	Welfare & Education	0-3: low/medium 3-6: medium/high 6-10: low/medium	Legal entitlement to education 4-6 year olds
Spain 6	Education	0-3: low/medium, 3-6: high 6-10: not available	No

Source: several sources have been used to compile this table

(i) School-starting age: First figure is for compulsory school age. Figure in brackets indicates age at which children may be admitted to primary school on voluntary basis  
(ii) Places in publicly funded services (i.e. places supply subsidised):

- 0-3 and 6-10 year olds: low = full-time equivalent places for less than 10 per cent of children; medium = 10-24 per cent; high = 25 per cent or more.
- 3-6 years: low = full-time equivalent places for less than 50 per cent of children; medium = 50-74 per cent; high = 75 per cent or more. Includes 5 year olds in compulsory schooling where compulsory school age is 5.



- early years care education;
- compulsory schooling;
- childcare for children of compulsory school age; and
- childcare for children below compulsory school age.

1.7 Across all countries, the review reveals that out-of-school services are weaker both in terms of development and available information. They have expanded only recently in many countries and are relative newcomers compared to schools and services for children below compulsory school age. They have also received far less attention in cross-national work: '*Until recently, out-of-school provision has received limited attention in most countries. It is often loosely regulated and there is a range of varying services with few reliable statistics or sources of information,*' (OECD, 2001: 54).

1.8 A summary of some of the key provision variables for the 15 countries covered by this study is presented in Table 1. It does not contain data on privately funded provision, nor on children whose fees are subsidised from public funding, neither of which are available. The table presents the most recent statistics available.

## 2. What is the relationship between early education, compulsory schooling and childcare for younger and older children?

2.1 The relationship between early education, compulsory schooling and childcare for younger and older children is defined in part by the age

when compulsory schooling begins and by the hours of compulsory schooling. These variables also define the part compulsory schooling plays in providing childcare.

### Age at start of compulsory schooling

2.2 The most common age for the start of compulsory schooling is 6 years (see Table 1, column 1). In the Nordic countries, the age is 7 although Norway recently reduced compulsory school starting age to 6. In the Netherlands, New Zealand and the UK, it is 5 (except for Northern Ireland, where it is 4). In the US, starting age varies between states from 5 to 7. However, children enter primary school before compulsory school age on a voluntary basis in several countries. In the Netherlands and the UK (except for Scotland), most children start primary school in reception as opposed to nursery classes, at 4. A number of countries have special nursery or kindergarten classes in primary schools, for: 6 year olds in three Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden), and for 3, 4 or 5 year olds in three English-language countries (Australia, UK and the US). In Europe, nursery education and kindergartens generally serve children aged 3 to 5 or 6 years.

### Hours of nursery schooling and kindergarten

2.3 Hours of attendance vary between and within countries. In some countries, non-school-based kindergartens are open on a full day, all year basis, and geared to the needs of employed parents. In east Germany (the former GDR), children have 48

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hours a week in full-time kindergartens geared to parental employment as well as education. There are 40 hours a week of full-time nursery schooling for children in France. In contrast, children in West Germany (the former FDR) have 20-30 hours, mainly in part-time kindergarten and children in England have 12.5 hours a week of part-time nursery education (Bertram and Pascal, 2002). In England, nursery education can be supplemented by private or voluntary funded provision. Kindergarten in New Zealand is also part-time. The longest hours for nursery schools and primary-school-based kindergarten are found in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain, the shortest in Australia, the UK and the US. A review of 21 nations states that the range of publicly funded provision is between 12.5 and 48 hours a week, with a mean of 32 hours (Bertram and Pascal, 2002: 20). These figures do not take account of any private or voluntary funded provision and consequently may underestimate the level of provision in those countries where a large proportion of provision is funded from these sectors.

## Hours of compulsory schooling

2.4 Considerable variation occurs in relation to hours of compulsory schooling between countries, in the following ways:

- The number of sessions per day that children attend and the length of the school day. In some cases, children attend two sessions, morning and afternoon (Australia, New Zealand, UK, US, France, Belgium, some parts of Germany, Spain and the Netherlands).

In others, children attend one session until lunchtime (Denmark and much of Germany). In Italy, schools have considerable flexibility to decide how to organise hours, which may vary between one and two sessions per day. In some countries (Denmark and Germany), the length of the school day increases with children's age, and may vary daily.

- The length of the break between sessions and whether children are supervised at this time. Lunchtime supervision is usual in most countries, but is a recent development in others such as the Netherlands and Spain, where it is still not widespread.
- Whether or not children have a free half day on Wednesdays (as has been traditional in France, Belgium and the Netherlands).
- The length of school holidays, from 12 weeks (e.g. Italy, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand) to 18 weeks (for secondary school children in both Ireland and Spain). In the UK children have around 13 weeks holiday per year. There are differences in the distribution of holidays throughout the year, with some working parents having to make arrangements for six school vacations while others have to arrange care for longer but less frequent school vacations. In other countries there are long holiday periods, for example, 15 weeks holiday per year in Sweden, 16 weeks in Portugal and 16-18 weeks in Spain. In Australia, the school year is organised into four ten-week terms.

## Responsibility for services

### *Pre-School*<sup>6</sup>

2.5 In seven of the 15 countries,

<sup>6</sup>From birth to statutory age for starting school.



responsibility for services for children below compulsory school age is divided between welfare and education. In fact, globally this is the most common administrative arrangement: *Pre-school arrangements for children from about the age of 3 based in education....[while] "care" services for children under this age fall under the responsibility of social welfare or health departments. In Australia, Portugal and the US, there is some overlap or parallel responsibilities for the age groups served by education, health and social affairs ministries, mostly in the two or three years prior to school entry* (OECD, 2001: 76-77).

2.6 France could be added to the 'overlap' category where 2 year olds may be in nurseries (welfare system) or in nursery schools (education). In four cases—New Zealand (1986), Spain (1990), Sweden (1996) and some parts of the UK (i.e. England<sup>7</sup> and Scotland, 1998) – responsibility for all services below compulsory school age is now unified within the education system. Responsibility is unified within the welfare system in Denmark, Finland and Norway. In Germany, responsibility for services for children below compulsory school age rests within the welfare system at federal level and is covered by the Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act, 1991. The main responsibility for childcare and education resides with individual states. Services for children under 6 years usually come under welfare, but in some states (e.g. Bavaria), Education Ministries are responsible for services for children from 3 to 6 years. This means in

practice that provision operates as two systems, despite all services falling within welfare. However, administration is only one dimension of the integration of services. There are many others including funding, access, types of service and staffing.

2.7 The process of integration has gone furthest in the four Nordic countries, where pre-school services are fully integrated, administered and provided by Education. Elsewhere, the integration process is only partially complete, having gone furthest in New Zealand in terms of staffing, funding and the curriculum.

#### *Out-of-school services*

2.8 Where out-of-school services are a recent development or few in number, they may not have a strong policy base (e.g. Italy, Spain and Australia). Alternatively, several departments may have some limited involvement, but no one department has overall responsibility. In New Zealand, the Ministry of Social Development administers a Child Care Subsidy to low-income parents. The Department of Child, Youth and Family sets standards which providers must meet in order to qualify for this subsidy. In the US, the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant relates to employed parents of children under 13 years. States determine eligibility and the grant is paid to parents or providers. The US Department of Education supports school-based provision in schools serving low-income populations through the 21st Century Community Learning Centres Fund.

<sup>7</sup> Early education and childcare is unified within one unit based at the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) although responsibility is shared with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

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- 2.9 In a number of countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal) administrative responsibility lies with welfare. Elsewhere there has been a shift to education. For example, in Denmark, Norway and Sweden most or all services come within the education system—having originally been in welfare. In England and Scotland, responsibility was originally divided between welfare and employment, but is now wholly within education. In Northern Ireland and Wales, it remains in welfare. In France, the Ministry of Education is substantially responsible for school-aged childcare in school-based provision and co-operates with other Ministries in providing services outside school hours.
- 2.10 Only two countries have brought administrative responsibility for the full range of provision (early education, compulsory schooling and childcare for all ages) within one administration: Sweden in 1996 and the UK (i.e. England and Scotland) in 1998. This responsibility extends to the provision of these services in Sweden and to their promotion through a variety of funding mechanisms in the UK.
- 2.11 Responsibility resides at different levels as well as with different departments. In federal countries, such as Australia, Germany, the US and Belgium, responsibility for education and childcare is usually found at the state or regional level (i.e. below the federal level). In Spain and the UK, responsibility is at community (e.g. Catalonia) or national level (e.g. Scotland). In the Nordic countries, there is a high level of decentralisation, where local authorities interpret and implement broadly defined national policy. Elsewhere (e.g. France and Italy), responsibility for education lies mainly with central government, with regional and local authorities having more responsibility for childcare services.
- ### 3. What form does provision take?
- Provision for children below compulsory school age**
- 3.1 We can distinguish four main types of service for children below compulsory school age as follows.
- (i) Schools, mostly dedicated to children below compulsory school age, but also classes within primary schools.
  - (ii) Age-integrated centres, i.e. where a centre receives children for the full age range from birth or more usually around age one year, to starting compulsory school (that is, up to around 6) – although not necessarily placing children in mixed age groupings within the centre.
  - (iii) Age-segregated centres, i.e. for one section of the age range below compulsory school age (e.g. children under 3 years, children aged 3 to 5 or 6 years).
  - (iv) Family day care—i.e. individuals caring for children in their own home (e.g. childminders in the UK).
- 3.2 The first set of services, schools, has a clear education orientation. The other three usually have a ‘childcare’ orientation and are intended primarily for children with working parents, though this education/care distinction is becoming blurred.



3.3 Services for children below compulsory school age are found in various combinations. The structure of provision is least complex in the Nordic countries. Children under 6 usually attend age-integrated, non-school-based centres, with some family day care provided for children under 3 years. Only Denmark has substantial numbers of age-segregated centres and, in recent years, has put more emphasis on age-integrated centres. Many Nordic children spend their pre-school years in one setting, unlike children in many other countries. Elsewhere, the most common mix is schools + age-segregated centres + family day care. Belgium and France illustrate this pattern. The main services in both countries are nurseries for children under 3 years, nursery schools for children from 2 to 6 years, plus family day care. England also fits into this mixed pattern, with children attending different provision: private day care, either nurseries or childminders, for children under three, with over threes continuing in private provision or attending state nursery schools, often supplemented by either childminders or school based 'wrap-around' services.

3.4 However in some countries, these broad categories mask a more complex network of services with several types of provision coming under the heading of 'age-segregated centres'. A recent UNESCO report on New Zealand distinguished five types of centre: childcare centres; playcentres; kindergartens; Nga kohanga reo (centres operating in the Maori language); and Pacific Island language

groups and early childhood centres (Meade and Podmore, 2001). This is in addition to family day care and pre-school classes attached to primary schools. Integrated responsibility for services in New Zealand is therefore accompanied by considerable diversity in types of provision, in contrast to the Nordic countries.

3.5 Family day care is a widespread form of provision for children below compulsory school age as well as older children, except in Italy and Spain. However, it takes differing forms. Family day carers may be independent, self-employed workers—this is typical in the English-language countries e.g. for childminders in the UK. At the other end of the spectrum, they may be employees of local authorities or other agencies. This is typical of the Nordic countries, Belgium and France. They may occupy various intermediate statuses, for example as independent workers who are members of a network (an emerging status in the UK (England) or working with an agency which acts as intermediary between parents and family day carers (as in the Netherlands).

#### **Provision for school-age children**

3.6 Provision of out-of-school services may take place in various settings, including family day care and age-integrated and age-segregated centres. Most provision is school based, though not necessarily school-run: *'In most countries, out-of-school takes the form of "wraparound" services on school premises before and after school hours, and sometimes during lunch time'* (OECD, 2001: 54).

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- 3.7 In Australia, 65 per cent of services are held in schools, although generally not run by the schools. In the US, many are run in schools (Miller, 2001). School-based provision has long been prevalent in both Flanders and Wallonia (Belgium), although in Flanders there is more development of centres outside schools. In Norway, the recent inception of out-of-school provision was established in schools. In Sweden and Denmark, there has been a shift in recent years from separate to school-based provision. Most 'free time services' are now based in schools, under the direction of the school principal and, in Sweden, with integrated staff and curriculum.
- 3.8 In west Germany (the former FDR), most provision is in centres – *Horte* – specifically for school-age children, usually located apart from schools. But a new development is for *Horte* to be held in schools, with their own accommodation. In east Germany (the former GDR), *Horte* are often organised in school buildings, but they are no longer part of the school system, coming instead under youth services, with the exception of a few states.
- 3.9 In France, there is an extensive network of services with two forms of organisation. *Services périscolaires* are the responsibility of the school and integrated into the school day. Primary schools are permitted to rearrange their hours and activities to cover extra-curricular activities. What in the UK (England) would be seen as extra-curricular learning activities often take place for all children after lunch. Children then return to the formal curriculum at around 15.00 hours and the formal school day ends at about 17.00 hours (often there is a school-based care service before and after school). As well as the school-based provision, *services extrascolaires* (out-of-school services) cover holidays and the customary free half day on Wednesdays. They are provided by local voluntary and statutory agencies, sometimes on school premises, sometimes in purpose-built premises. Children can attend both services. In addition, there is a developed system of publicly-subsidised residential holiday provision.
- 3.10 Portugal and New Zealand are among the few countries where services are usually provided in centres separate from the school. In Portugal, the function of services as sites for children's homework, as well as leisure, is long standing. There is also private family day care where children's homework is supervised. In Germany, with its relatively short school day, homework often has an established part in the daily timetable.
- 3.11 There is growing interest in several countries (e.g. the Netherlands, England and Scotland and the US) in schools providing a base for a range of services and activities, particularly for schools serving disadvantaged areas, and often including youth and social work in addition to school-age childcare (NIZW, 2001). In the UK (England), various policies promote this approach, where it also has some history in the community school



movement. For example, i) The Education Act, 2002 extends the remit of school governors to provide other services, such as childcare; ii) the government has promoted study support and out-of-school learning activities, which can be school-based, and iii) the Connexions service, which operates in part through schools, may be seen as a type of youth service or welfare measure.

### Levels of provision

3.12 As discussed in the introductory paper (Moss et al., 2003), it is difficult to produce a genuinely comparable table of levels of provision in different countries, for the following reasons:

- National economic, political and cultural contexts differ so that caution is needed in making comparisons and drawing conclusions.
- The English-language world mostly limits itself to the study of English-language documentation. For many native English speakers, this closes off work in other languages and limits understanding of other countries' policies.
- There is a lack of comparable statistics.

3.13 For more detailed information on national levels of provision, see EC Childcare Network 1996, and OECD 2001. Apart from variability in national statistics, there are many provisos that need to be considered:

- Parental leave on demand—government statistics for services in Sweden cover children from 1 to 6 years only, because they assume children under 12 months are at home with a parent taking leave.

- Not only do schools tend to count 'pupils' while other services count 'places', but school hours vary considerably between countries and are usually substantially less than those for non-school services.

3.14 Comparative tables usually focus on publicly funded services, partly because statistics for them are more readily available and partly because of an interest in public policy support for services. However, such tables are not usually able to represent public funding when it takes the form of 'demand subsidy' (i.e. payments, such as the Childcare Tax Credit, made to parents rather than to services) nor of funding to provision from sources such as the New Opportunities Fund..

### Summary of levels of provision for children below school age

#### *Nordic countries*

3.15 With the exception of Norway, provision is available as of right and on demand from birth in Finland, from 6 months in Denmark and from 12 months in Sweden. In Sweden, 95 percent of local authorities could offer places for pre-school age children within 3 to 4 months according to figures from 1998. The OECD (2001) report notes that in Finland the right to a place is 'scrupulously respected'. In Denmark, only a few local authorities have waiting lists for children aged from birth to 9 years, with a fall from 32,000 to 5,000 between 1992 and 1999.

3.16 In Denmark and Sweden, three-quarters of children aged 1 to 6 years attend a publicly funded service (either in a centre or with a family day carer) on a full-time basis. The

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proportion is lower in Finland – a quarter of children aged 1 to 3 years, two-thirds of children aged 3 to 6 years, again mostly full-time. This lower proportion partly reflects the long period of paid leave in Finland, up to a child's third birthday. Norway has similar levels of attendance for children aged 3 to 6 years, 80 percent, but lower levels than Denmark and Sweden for children aged 1 to 3 years. At approximately 50 percent, this reflects a lower level of service development.

### *English-language countries*

- 3.17 There are no entitlements, except to part-time education for 4 year olds in the UK with policy to expand entitlement to part-time education to all 3 year olds on track for 2004. These countries rely heavily on private provision and published estimates are hard to come by. All but New Zealand channel most public funding for non-school services through demand subsidies paid to parents (except for anti-poverty programmes in England such as Sure Start<sup>8</sup> local programmes and Headstart in the US). For these reasons, it is difficult to assess levels of provision and the contribution of public, private and voluntary funding. In Australia, less than a quarter of children from 1 to 4 years are in formal services, although it is estimated that fee subsidies are available to 98 percent of parents. School-based provision is available to 4 and 5 year olds, with attendance in states varying between 80 and 96 percent for 5 year olds. More children in the US attend formal services (a third of children under 2 years) although there is no information on

what proportion benefit from fee subsidy. Almost all 5 year olds are enrolled in school-based kindergartens, and an increasing number of states are offering 'pre-kindergarten' to 4 year olds, with more than 60 percent of 4 year olds enrolled in educational programmes in private services or schools.

- 3.18 New Zealand is the only English-language country not to rely mainly on demand subsidy. Most funding comes from a grant-in-aid to services. For more details on funding systems, see the briefing paper on funding and sustainability (Candappa et al., 2003). By the late 1990s, nearly all 4 year olds and over 80 percent of 3 year olds were enrolled in some form of early childhood education, while it is estimated that over half of all children from birth to 5 years old attend a service (Meade and Podmore, 2001).

### *Other European countries*

- 3.19 Levels of publicly funded provision are generally higher in other European countries than in the English-language countries. The level of funding from the private and voluntary sectors in these countries is not known. All, bar one, have achieved, or are close to achieving, universal educational provision for children from 3 to 6 years. Unlike the Nordic countries, however, these services are only available during school hours. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Portugal extend a legal entitlement to services for this age group. In the case of Portugal, children are 4 and 5 years old. For children under 3 years, the picture is

<sup>8</sup>When the review was undertaken Sure Start was an anti-poverty programme, but it now has a wider remit that includes targeted provision for the most disadvantaged areas.



more variable. A quarter to a third of children under 3 are in publicly funded services in Belgium and France, including a substantial number of 2 year olds in nursery school. In the other five European countries, provision of publicly funded services covers less than 15 percent of children, although in Germany, this masks a substantial difference between levels in East and West. In most European countries 3 and 6 years are significant ages of transfer, first into nursery schooling/kindergarten, then into compulsory schooling. In the Netherlands, however, the significant age is 4 when most children start school on a voluntary basis, a year before compulsory schooling. Children under 4 are outside the education system. About 20 percent of this younger age group attend formal childcare services. In addition, over half of 2 and 3 year olds attend part-time playgroups.

### Summary of levels of provision for school-aged children

- 3.20 Information on levels of out-of-school provision are harder to come by. The recent development of these services means they are less widely available than pre-school services.

#### *Nordic countries*

- 3.21 Sweden and Denmark are most able to meet demand. Services are less developed in Norway and are particularly low in Finland.

#### *English-language countries*

- 3.22 Statistics on providers and parents receiving public funds are not collated in the US. By 1991, at least

50,000 school-age childcare programmes across the US served an estimated 1.7 million children (Seppanen et al, 1993). Funding, including short-term funding, may come from many sources, public and private. It is estimated that around 30 percent of the Child Care Development Fund (more than \$3 billion per year) is used to subsidise care for school-age children (Miller, 2001). Levels are probably rather low for most other countries. In New Zealand, about 4 percent of school-aged children attend out-of-school services (Department of Labour, 1999).

#### *Other European countries*

- 3.23 France has extensive services that provide for children from when they enter nursery school. Nearly half of children attend out-of-school services in the former East Germany, a far higher proportion than in the West. Elsewhere, reliable statistics are not available. In Belgium, a 1994 survey of 99 schools in Brussels found that 87 percent provided supervision before and after school as well as in the lunch hour. In the Flemish municipalities, there were places for between 15 percent and 23 percent of children. In Portugal in 1993, there were places for approximately 10 percent of 6 to 10 year old children, with little if any change since (source: personal communication).

## 4. What forms of provision are expanding and which are declining?

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- 4.1 The provider mix varies between countries. Public provision by local authorities is high in the Nordic

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countries with the lowest level in Norway, where 58 percent of children under 6 years attend publicly provided centres. Private, for-profit providers are mainly found in English-language countries. The UK has the highest proportion of for-profit providers, with 90 percent of the 'nursery market by value' provided by private businesses (Laing & Buisson, 2002). By contrast, in the US, not-for-profit providers run two-thirds of nurseries (OECD, 2001).

- 4.2 In all countries, services providing early education and childcare are expanding. There is little evidence of declining forms of provision. The main exceptions are in the Nordic countries, which are undergoing some reconfiguration of their extensive services. In Denmark and Sweden, separate centres providing out-of-school services are mostly replaced by school-based provision. In Denmark, family day care for school-age children has also diminished as school-based services have increased. In Sweden, as in the UK, the number of pre-school children in family day care has fallen rapidly in recent years by over 40 percent between 1995 and 1999. The reasons for this decline are not known. In part, it may be due to a decline in those offering family day care. An important change in the Nordic countries has been the declining use of informal childcare for all ages, as formal services have developed. In Sweden, in 1999, only 3 percent of children aged 1 to 6 years were cared for by a relative or a private family day carer, compared to 65 percent in age-integrated centres and 11 percent in organised family

day care (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2001). In the same year in Denmark, just 2 percent of 3 year olds were cared for by relatives, compared to 90 percent in formal services.

### 5. How far are services co-ordinated so that children's experience is coherent?

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- 5.1 Because of the integrated structure of services, children's experience is likely to be most coherent in the Nordic countries. Most children need only attend one service up to the age they start school, although some may move from family day care to a centre at around the age of 3 years. Then, out-of-school services are likely to be closely integrated with school. In other countries, many children are likely to move, with age, between pre-school services, while out-of-school care is more likely to be organised separately from the school. Countries are paying increasing attention to continuity between early childhood services and school with curriculum frameworks that either span the end of pre-school and the beginning of compulsory school (Finland, France and the UK) or cover from birth to 18 years (South Australia). Alternatively, countries have curricular for pre-school and school that are different, but conceptually linked (Sweden, Spain).

### 6. What are the barriers to take-up of out-of-school provision for older children?

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- 6.1 There is even less cross-national work on out-of-school provision for older school children (that is children over the age of 10 or 11 years) than



for primary aged children. One difficulty is that facilities that may also serve as childcare, from the point of view of parents, may be classified as youth services or cultural services rather than childcare. Such services do not necessarily fit childcare criteria recognised in the UK. For example, they may not be open immediately after school ends, they may not escort young people from school to the service, and they may allow young people to leave when they wish (e.g. Meijvogel and Petrie, 1996; Petrie et al., 2000).

6.2 Research suggests that provision for older children is an issue in Australia and New Zealand. In the US, provision is said to be uneven and locally determined. In France, the *Contrat Educatif Local* (Local Education Contract) will apply to this age group and covers out-of-school cultural and sporting activities that may function as care services for older children, if not primarily intended as such. In Belgium, too, they are said to come under the cultural sector. In addition to services for younger school-age children, both Denmark and Sweden have clubs mainly for older children, which place less emphasis on care and more on social and recreational activities. For example, in Denmark: '*Clubs (klubber) for children over 10 years are expanding, giving this age group of children the possibility to attend a recreational, leisure and caring facility. The clubs are also aimed at children at risk who need special support and are including young people from 14-17 years*' (Jensen and Hansen, 2002: 29).

6.3 In Denmark, many children aged 10 to 13 years attend school-based schemes and 11 percent attend clubs that open at the end of the school day (i.e. from around noon). Apart from the availability of services, take-up of services by older children in Denmark may be related to Danish children remaining in the same school from 6 to 16 years of age. Take-up may therefore be affected by structural factors, such as the age at which children transfer from primary to secondary school.

## 7. What is the relationship to wider family support policies?

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7.1 The services we are considering in these seminar papers have had two main purposes: education and care for children of working parents. There is a strong, general trend towards all services adopting an educational orientation, with education *and* childcare services increasingly covered by curricular frameworks (see the briefing paper on child outcomes, McQuail et al., 2003). There is also increasing recognition that services can contribute to lifelong learning, not only for children but for their families: '*Early childhood settings can support families by providing links to parenting education, continuing education and adult literacy courses, which may allow parents to resume their own education*' (OECD, 2001: 118).

7.2 Childcare services have been viewed primarily as a support for families in which parents are working. Initially targeted at poor families, prior to the expansion of mothers with children in the workforce, services have

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moved towards a more universal remit. Today, it is mothers with high levels of education and from higher income families who are most likely to be employed (Moss and Deven, 2000). Services are also increasingly complemented by other policies intended to support parents managing employment and family responsibilities. Childcare services and leave policies are closely related, especially for children under 3 years. Some countries (Finland and France) operate an explicit policy of parental choice while children are under 3 years, with a long period of paid leave and substantial provision of public support to services. Other countries (e.g. Germany) operate a policy intended to encourage maternal care for young children, through a long period of low paid and unpaid leave and little public support for services.

7.3 A third policy option, illustrated by Sweden, assumes that parents will be employed, except for a relatively short period around childbirth, and provides extensive support. A 13-month period of highly paid parental leave is combined with a legal entitlement to a place in a publicly funded service for children from 12 months of age until 12 years, a right to paid leave to care for sick children and the right to work reduced hours until a child is 8 years old (Moss and Deven, 2000). But services may relate to other family support policies. The US and the UK (England) have invested heavily in early intervention programmes (Head Start and Sure Start) intended to reduce poverty and improve later educational achievement among disadvantaged

groups. This can be seen as a reflection of their liberal welfare regimes, with their emphasis on targeted policies (see the introductory paper, Moss et al., 2003). No other countries have introduced similar national early-intervention anti-poverty programmes. The Nordic countries successfully minimise child poverty through strong redistributive policies (for national levels of child poverty, see Table 3 in the introductory paper, Moss et al., 2003).

7.4 Most countries are increasingly aware of the potential of services for supporting parents and other carers in general and certain groups and communities in particular: *'There are signs that the concept of services for under 3s is broadening from 'child care' to support working or disadvantaged parents to include educational, gender equality, social integration and family support objectives'* (OECD, 2001: 56).

7.5 This involves both the evolution of existing services and the development of new ones. In Italy, 'new typology services' (*nuove tipologie*) have been developing since the 1980s to complement nurseries and nursery schools. Similar developments can be traced in many countries. Services, it is increasingly argued, can contribute to community-building and maintaining the identity of particular communities (e.g. centres which work with children in their mother tongue for example in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales). A number of countries have initiatives to involve immigrant and minority ethnic communities, seeing early years provision as a

means for promoting inclusion of children and their parents.

- 7.6 Finally, France provides an important example of how services can be related to a wide range of other policies, within a universal (inclusive) approach. With the *Contrat Educatif Local* (CEL) France has addressed societal responsibility for children's induction into French culture and citizenship, over and above parental responsibility. The usage of *Contrat Educatif* refers to *éducation* in the French sense, relating to the whole child: mind, body, emotions, creativity, and sociability. The *Contrat* was launched in July 1998 and October 2000 by four government Ministers (School Education, Youth and Sport, Culture and Communication, and Urban Affairs). It is seen as an attempt to co-ordinate the all round education of children and young people. (Ministre de l'enseignement scolaire, Ministre de la jeunesse et des sports, Ministre de la culture et de la communication, Ministre délégué à la ville, 1998).
- 7.7 In France, the state guarantees universal access to school, it is acknowledged that access to culture and knowledge, broadly defined, is very unequal. The *Contrat Educatif Local* aims to bring all those with a concern for different services and facilities for children within a co-ordinated framework, extending beyond school hours. The initiative promotes projects for children of all ages. It is expected to cover areas that are as large and coherent as possible (communes, groups of communes, sectors of large towns). All relevant local organisations, statutory and

voluntary, are to be involved in the *Contrat*, as are schools, colleges and parents.

## 8. What are the key features of a mature childcare market?

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- 8.1 If we take 'mature childcare market' to mean providing affordable, good quality services that meet demand across the age range, then this has only been achieved in Denmark and Sweden. Finland might be included for children below compulsory school age, but it has very limited out-of-school childcare for older children. The term 'mature childcare market' would not be familiar to most people in Denmark and Sweden, because provision is publicly funded and provided. Access to provision is couched more in terms of entitlement, within the context of welfare regimes oriented to universal services. Furthermore, neither country would regard its services as simply providing 'childcare'. Instead, they combine care, learning and upbringing in an integrated pedagogical approach (see the introductory paper (Moss et al., 2003) for discussion of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon welfare regimes and for further discussion of the concept of 'pedagogy').
- 8.2 We shall use Sweden as a case study because, like the UK, it has located responsibility for all 'childcare' services within the education system. Much of the information in this section comes from the Swedish National Agency for Education 2001. The recent Swedish reforms affecting the relationship between different services and the



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workforce are fully discussed in Moss and Petrie (2002). We can identify a number of key features of the Swedish service system.

### A high level of provision

- 8.3 Legislation in 1995 placed a duty on local authorities to provide a place for children from 1 to 12 years within a reasonable time. This entitlement was restricted to children with employed or studying parents or children with special needs. There are enough places to meet demand in this way and they are available on a full-time basis. In practice, pre-school children attend services for 31 hours a week, while schoolchildren attend free-time centres (the Swedish term for out-of-school provision) for just under 17 hours a week. Most parents in Sweden organise their work hours so that children attend services on average for 6 to 7 hours a day. Demand has been more broadly defined since the transfer of early education and childcare services from welfare to education in 1996. Since 2001, the entitlement to a place has been extended. Parents on parental leave or who are unemployed now have a right to a part-time place for their children. Nearly all families have access as of right: the link between access and employment has been broken. This is likely to increase the coverage rate from the current 75 percent of children between 1 and 6 years. The entitlement begins from a child's first birthday because a well-paid parental leave scheme ensures there is little demand for places for children under 12 months of age.

### Places are not only available, but also affordable

- 8.4 The cost of services in the Swedish system, as in other Nordic countries, is met by public funding paid direct to services and an income-related contribution from parents. In the 1990s, the average parental contribution increased from around 10 percent to 18 percent of total cost. With decentralisation, contributions varied between local authorities. Local authorities can now opt into a government-funded scheme, which sets a maximum level on what parents pay: a proportion of family income that reduces for a second or third child. For example, the parental fee for one child attending a pre-school centre is 3 percent of household income, before tax, up to a maximum of SEK1,140 a month (122.374 Euro as of July 2002); for a second child parents pay 2 percent of household income and for a third child 1 percent. No fees are charged on fourth and subsequent children. Municipalities may fix fees at a lower rate than this if they wish to, and some do. This 'Max Tax', adopted by all except two local authorities, has produced substantial reductions in parental fees and has been very popular. The second measure is free provision for 4 and 5 year olds (from January 2003) for 525 hours a year, roughly equivalent to 3 hours a day. This brings Sweden in line with countries running a free nursery education system.
- 8.5 Both measures are linked to the move of services into education: '*They bring pre-school [the Swedish term for services for children from 1 to 6 years]*



*closer to the principle underlying all schools, that they should be free, available to all, a principle which, for schools at any rate, is now hardly questioned.'* (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 2000a: 1).

- 8.6 They confirm that Swedish services are more than 'childcare for working parents', but have a strong educational and universal orientation. In the words of the 1998 Pre-school Curriculum: '*The pre-school should be enjoyable, secure and rich in learning for all children... [providing] children with good pedagogical activities where care, nurturing and learning together form a coherent whole'* (Swedish Ministry for Education and Science, 1998: 8).

#### **A professionalised workforce ensures good standards**

- 8.7 Most provision in Sweden is centre-based, with little family day care (around 10% of all provision). Pre-school teachers, accounting for over 60 percent of workers in pre-school centres, and free-time pedagogues form the main workforce. Both professions have until recently had a three-year training at the higher education level. However, since Autumn 2001, a new common training has been introduced, incorporating pre-school teachers, free-time pedagogues and school teachers working with children and young people from 6 to 19 years. All students now complete a minimum 3½-year higher education, including 18 months of shared training. The remainder of the time will be for more specialist options, in terms both of subjects and fields of work (e.g.

pre-school work, work in free-time services, different phases of compulsory schooling). All staff – whatever their specialisation – will be known as teachers (Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 2000b).

#### **There has been long-term public policy commitment**

- 8.8 This movement towards a universal, affordable service, with a highly professionalised staff, has been based on a sustained development over 30 years or more. Services began to expand from the end of the 1960s, initially in response to increasing labour market participation by women. While there have been some significant changes over this time (most recently the transfer to education), there has also been steady evolution and sustained public policy interest informed by a number of commissions and excellent statistical information. This is reflected in strong public funding. In 1999, total local authority expenditure on 'childcare' (including classes for 6 year olds in school) came to SEK 39.7 billion (4.26 Bn Euro). This is equivalent to 1.9 percent of GDP. High levels of public satisfaction with these services have supported this sustained investment in public services. Surveys consistently show that pre-schools and free-time centres are the most popular public services in Sweden (Cohen et al., forthcoming).

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### The seminar papers

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Cameron, C., Candappa, M., McQuail, S., Mooney, A., Moss, P. and Petrie, P. (2003) *Early Years and Childcare International Evidence Project: The Workforce*. London: DfES.

Candappa, M., Moss, P., Cameron, C., McQuail, S., Mooney, A. and Petrie, P. (2003) *Early Years and Childcare International Evidence Project: Funding and Sustainability*. London: DfES.

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### Copies of the seminar papers

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Copies of the seminar papers and this summary paper are available from the DfES research website:  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research>.

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<sup>9</sup>This is a report on the OECD thematic review of Early Childhood Education and Care conducted in 12 countries. Copies of national background reports prepared for the thematic review and national notes prepared by review teams are downloadable from the OECD website: [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org).

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## Useful websites

Care Work in Europe Project:

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/tcru/carework.htm>

DfES Research:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research>

Effective Provision of Pre-school Education  
(EPPE) Project:

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/eppe>

NICHD Study of Early Child Care:

[http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/early\\_early\\_child\\_care.htm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/early_child_care.htm)

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and  
Development (OECD) Country Notes and Reports:

<http://www.oecd.org/EN/documentation/0,,EN-documentation-602-nodirectora>

The Sure Start Unit:

<http://www.surestart.gov.uk>

Thomas Coram Research Unit:

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/tcru>