Department for Education: Childcare and Early Year Provision Analysis

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Overview of the Data Fellowship

The Department for Education is a government department responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education.

My project overview included writing an evidence review on the current available research on 'factors that affect parent's experiences, views, and use of early year provision (Children aged 0-4 years old). To consolidate the review, I conducted secondary analysis on the latest DfE Parent survey (published in 2019) on the software tool SPSS, extracting relevant data/findings.

Data Analysis

I conducted secondary exploratory analysis on the published Childcare and Early Years survey 2019. There were particular factors that the DfE were interested in analysing including: deprivation level, area, family type (lone parents vs couple parents) and parents who worked atypical hours. The data was initially presented in Excel, with further analysis conducted in SPSS which I had not previously used. I welcomed the opportunity to learn a new package and expand upon my quantitative analysis skill set. SPSS analysis included production of cross tabs to enable bivariate analysis between parent responses and the aforementioned factors. Results generated were checked to ensure statistical significance.

Figure 1: Image from the Childcare Survey 2020 - Family and childcare trust. Source used within the evidence review.

Findings

- With heightened discussion on whether the current childcare system is only viable to parents who work typical Monday to Friday 9-5 jobs, this review is timely. It was necessary for the DfE to explore the views of parents who work atypical hours, to ascer-

Table 2.2 National estimates of use of childcare		
Use of childcare	Number of families	Number of children
Any childcare	3,743,000	5,477,000
Formal childcare and early years provision	2,811,000	3,704,000
Nursery school	198,000	200,000
Nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school	248,000	261,000
Day nursery	411,000	448,000
Playgroup or pre-school	312,000	311,000
Breakfast/ after-school club or activity, on school site	1,376,000	1,627,000
Breakfast/ after-school club or activity, off school site	301,000	397,000
Childminder	264,000	352,000
Informal childcare	2,084,000	2,880,000
Ex-partner	347,000	459,000
Grandparent	1,325,000	1,842,000
Older sibling	267,000	292,000
Another relative	301,000	373,000
Friend or neighbour	337,000	396,000
Note: all figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.		

Figure 2: Breakdown of the use of formal and informal childcare

tain if their needs are being met, before accordingly challenging how and why the childcare system may need to be changed and this evidence review would allow them to gather the necessary intel.

- Findings indicated that lone parents and those that worked atypical hours were the most likely to want greater flexibility with childcare, with affordability also noted as a point of contention.

- Couple parents were also more likely to know about childcare entitlements and make use of them (including the Tax-Free child care and 30 hour entitlement for 3-4 year olds) than lone parents, indicating the need for greater support/advertisement.

Key Skills Learnt

I built upon many valuable skills during my time at the DfE including my interpersonal and communication skills. Collaboration played a major role in my project, and I had to pull information from various sources and people within my team. I also had the opportunity to work on other projects, including QAing statistics that were to be published as part of a COVID study, and planning an upcoming qualitative study on the views and experiences of parents who work atypical hours.

At the end of the internship, I presented my analysis and review to the wider team, a moment of self-development and improved confidence. I left the review with some final thoughts and evidence gaps, that I considered useful for the team to follow up. This was receieved really well, exemplifying how rewarding and insightful data analysis can be.