

EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL WITHIN THE CHILDCARE SECTOR



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March 1998**

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Researched by and written by Mary O'Sullivan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This research examines the area of pre-school and after-school child care provision as sources of potential employment. Towards that end, an overview of recent reports and studies at national and EU level dealing with developments in child care, employment equality and family related areas is initially presented. A number of indicators and projections of the need and demand for child care services are offered with a view to establishing the potential for employment within this sector. This potential is investigated in a more concrete context by means of a comprehensive survey of parents' use of pre-school and after-school services in Limerick city and county. Current participation in these services is contrasted with parents' expressed preferences if more affordable and convenient child care places were available. The findings are further complemented by two micro surveys exploring parents' needs for a child care service in two specific communities. The research concludes with a telephone survey investigating the current provision of child care facilities for employees by companies in the Shannon area.

The findings demonstrate that, in the context of current trends, the demand for child care provision will increase substantially. On this basis, corresponding increases in the employment of child care personnel are expected.

Social Trends

The report outlines a number of substantial social changes in contemporary Irish society which have resulted in an increased need and demand for child care services. In particular, it documents the growing use by parents of child care facilities which are aimed at the social and educational aspects of child development. Evidence of this is seen in the expansion of developmental and educational pre-school services in recent years.

The importance of quality child care services for a child's intellectual, social and emotional development is further reflected by the state's use of such facilities for children in disadvantaged circumstances as a means of addressing developmental vulnerability. Indeed, child care services have become an increasingly central element of state strategy in preventing serious family crisis and children experiencing stress and neglect.

The demand for child care facilities is also affected by the growth in the number of lone parents within society. The provision of affordable child care plays a crucial role in encouraging their participation in work and/or training and education. This is of concern given the evidence provided that lone-parent families are particularly at risk of poverty, especially where the woman has the role of sole breadwinner.

The most significant trend affecting the requirement for child care services is the increasing numbers of women entering, re-entering and remaining in the workforce. The study outlines the key factors influencing women's increasing employment rates. It anticipates the requirement for an enhanced sharing of responsibilities between the society at large and the family system in regard to child care.

Changes in state policy regarding women's role in society and the growing involvement of the state in child care provision are reflected in the number of significant policy developments in EU and national legislation since the 1970's. The evolution of this legislative transformation is outlined in detail, beginning with the removal of the marriage bar in the Civil Service in 1973 and concluding with the recent commitment to develop a national framework for child care provision, contained in the Partnership 2000 agreement, between the government and the social partners. The development of such a framework implies a likely increase in the numbers of child care staff to implement such a commitment.

Socio-economic and Demographic Indicators

This section of the study details a number of indicators which may be used to determine the level of need for child care provision in Ireland. The absence of a comprehensive state registration and central database on child care services in Ireland gives rise to a lack of standardised information regarding provision. Although the recently introduced Child Care (Preschool Services) Regulations 1996 will to some extent

address this issue when fully implemented, it was decided that more useful indices of the need for child care facilities would be provided by examining the trends in population, marriage and lone parenthood and the participation of women in the workforce.

The study reveals a number of significant points in this regard. Based on fertility and mobility trends, and despite an increase in the annual number of births between 1961 and 1981, and increases in the numbers of women in the most fertile age groups, it would appear that child population figures in Ireland will continue to decline. However, contrary to inferring a corresponding decrease in the need for services, the evidence from almost all countries in the EU is that mothers are more likely to remain in the workforce with one or two children than with three or more. Consequently, with fertility rates down to under two children and female education levels increasing, it would appear that women, particularly those with higher educational qualifications, will continue to work and combine motherhood.

There are also increasing numbers of couples in which both partners are working and a sharp decrease in the numbers of couples where only the male is in employment. This development indicates a potential need for child care services for the children of this group.

An analysis of industrial earnings by women and men indicates that the average female salary has increased in the period 1971 to 1996 and that the gap between women and men's earnings is narrowing. The greater spending power of lone parent families in which the mother is working and indeed the increased income of all working parents makes it more likely that they can afford non-family/relative child care arrangements.

In addition, the research indicates significant changes in the type of work undertaken by women. For example, the percentage of female agricultural workers has fallen from 14% in 1951 to less than 3% in 1996. In contrast, the services sector accounted for over 80% of all female employment in 1996 as compared to approximately 63% in 1961. This has meant that women are less likely to be home-based and, therefore, available to care for their children in rural areas. As the service sector is expanding, it is likely that women's overall participation rates will continue to increase, giving rise to a greater demand for child care services among this group.

A Survey of the Use and Preferences of Parents of Pre-school and Schoolgoing Services

This survey focuses on children of pre-school age and children attending school who were still young enough to require some after-school care. Accordingly, two groups of parents were chosen to participate in the study:

- a Parents with children in Junior Infant classes in national schools were selected on the grounds that they may have recently used or had a requirement for pre-school services.
- b Parents of Fourth Class pupils were surveyed on the basis that the children still require after-school care.

The schools which participated were randomly chosen from the total number of primary schools in Limerick city and county listed by the Department of Education. Twenty, of the initial twenty-six schools selected, agreed to participate. These schools reflected a satisfactory urban/rural representation and were drawn from areas of both advantage and disadvantage.

The survey was conducted using questionnaires divided into two sections, one for those respondents not using any child care service and the other for those who were. The questionnaire for the Junior Infant parents' group contained twenty-nine items for those respondents using a child care service and seventeen items for those who did not. Respondents were asked to provide information relating to the six month period before their child entered the Junior Infant class, thus providing recent information regarding pre-school services.

The Fourth Class questionnaire contained twenty-six items for those respondents who used some form of after-school care and sixteen items for those who did not. Questions were grouped to explore a number of key topics including child care arrangements, satisfaction levels, preference for alternative services, information services and finally, personal details of the respondents - marital status, living arrangements, employment status and income of parents, etc. Additional comments were invited at the end of the questionnaires. The total number of accepted questionnaires was 208 for the Junior Infant parents (51%) and 187 for the Fourth Class group (60%).

Results

The overwhelming majority of respondents were mothers. Excluding mothers living alone this finding reflects those of other research studies identifying mothers as the key figures in the management and organisation of their children's care and education. Current use of services amounted to 64% of pre-school services and 22% of after-school services. The predominant pre-school service in use was the playgroup (38%) followed by childminders/neighbours (27%). The after-school age group used childminders/neighbours (49%) and relatives (38%). However, when asked for their views on using a child care facility if more affordable and convenient provision was available, 62% of respondents from both groups expressed a preference to do so. This contrasts with a figure of 47% of all respondents who have actually used such services, a substantial difference of 15% between the actual and the potential use of child care facilities.

For the most part, parents stated that they would prefer a greater input by community services or the health board in providing child care services. This indicates a gap between the desired availability and current provision of types of services.

Over half of the respondents (54%) require child care to facilitate their employment or their continuing education and training. This was particularly true of the rural parents. Nonetheless, 25% of the sample reported developing the child's school skills as an important concern while 12% listed developing the child's learning skills as the primary reason for requiring child care.

There is a clear indication in the findings that the location of the service is the most important factor in determining parents' choice of service and is a more significant element than the qualifications and experience of the provider. Indeed, only 41% of respondents stated that the service provider caring for their child had some qualification in child care. Of these 24% were operating playgroups whereas a mere 3% stated that the childminders they availed of had any qualifications at all. Similar figures emerged regarding insurance in that only 34% of respondents replied that the child care service they used had some form of insurance. Notably 22% of those respondents availed of playgroups. A single respondent reported that her childminder had specific insurance to cover her child care responsibilities.

The majority of parents required a five day service to facilitate their work pattern. For those parents who used child care services as a means of enhancing their child's development and socialisation, a three to five day service was needed. A substantial number of parents indicated a preference for more interactive and organised activities at the child care centre.

In general, parents became aware of services from friends and relatives (54%). Information about child care from health boards and other statutory sources was noticeably low (2%).

The findings of the survey demonstrate that almost two thirds of parents with pre-school children have used some form of child care service and that over a fifth of parents with children in Fourth Class use after-school care. Excluding playgroups, the care of children would appear to lie extensively with the informal care sector, eg. neighbours, relatives and childminders. The extent of formal or organised care services for the after-school age group is noticeably low. The results in general highlight the scarcity of formal child care services which provide an organised programme of activities and particularly so, for the older age group.

Forthcoming inspections of child care facilities by health boards under the Pre-school Regulations, 1996, should have the effect of raising awareness among parents about standards and quality in child care services.

The increased availability of information which is likely following the implementation of the Child Care Act 1991, should lead to higher demands for more formal care services.

This survey clearly identifies a gap in the market between current service provision and parents' needs. This gap can be justifiably used when estimating the potential for an increase in provision and subsequently, the potential for employment in the sector.

The Micro Surveys

This section of the study outlines two micro surveys examining the needs of parents for community creches in their localities. The studies were conducted in the urban area of Moyross, Limerick city and in the rural setting of Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co Clare. The Moyross community centre already had a creche in operation but was in the process of expanding its services with the opening of a new purpose built creche. There was no service in operation in Newmarket-on-Fergus but a local group was interested in investigating the need for such a facility in the area.

In Moyross, the survey investigated parents' awareness of the existing community creche and to identify their preferences in relation to an expanded service. Accordingly, a house to house survey was undertaken in the nine major housing areas in the locality. Ten parents, randomly selected in each area, completed questionnaires. The houses were visited by an interviewer who assisted respondents with the questions.

In Newmarket-on-Fergus, the objective was to identify and examine the potential need for a community crèche. The findings would be used as part of a feasibility study examining the establishment of a facility in the area. The survey was conducted by local interviewers who visited homes, where there were children of school-going age, resident. The survey sample was chosen from households in areas selected by the community group office. The selected areas comprised households within a mixed range of socio-economic backgrounds and included respondents living in both local authority and non-local authority housing.

Results

Although both surveys were designed to address issues of specific interest to each group, the findings are somewhat comparable. A substantial majority in both samples indicated that some form of child care service or assistance is required by parents on a regular basis. As in the case of the school survey reported above, the surveys indicated a likely increase in numbers using the service on completion of the extended service in Moyross and the establishment of such a facility in Newmarket-on-Fergus. Interestingly, the Moyross parents listed facilitating their participation in work and training as the main reason for using the service (60%). The rural parents presented the opportunity for the child to socialise and play with other children as the primary advantage of having such a facility in their area. Parents in the two areas would use the centres at different times between 9.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. With regard to the existing facility at Moyross, the study reveals that, in line with the findings of the school survey, the majority (76%) of the parents here were made aware of the service by a relative, friend or neighbour. Once again information about the service was received from professional sources by a very small number of parents(5%).

The Company Survey

In the school survey reported above, only 2% of respondents used creche/nursery facilities in the workplace. This survey of companies in the Shannon region aimed at examining further the issue of child care services currently provided for employees.

Companies with staff numbers exceeding 100 were selected from the SFADCO database of companies in the region. It was considered unlikely that organisations with smaller staff numbers would have the resources to provide child care services on site or locally. The companies were contacted without prior notice and an effort was made to interview the personnel officer by telephone. Alternatively, the shop steward, union representative/ member or manager was approached. Of the seventy-five companies contacted, sixty-eight (91 %) responded.

Results

None of the companies surveyed currently provide any kind of child care services. However, one organisation is presently preparing plans to establish such a facility. Two of the companies contacted stated a willingness to consider providing child care facilities if the staff requested such provision. The majority indicated that they would not provide child care services either due to lack of interest among employees, lack of space or budgetary constraints. A more detailed survey of this topic is required in order to determine the validity of the reasons given for the lack of possible child care options in the workplace. It is noteworthy in this regard that many employers are willing to assist employees in combining family responsibilities with work. For example, flexible working hours, part-time work schedules and career breaks have already been introduced into many large companies in the Shannon region. Employers may be quite open to the provision of child care facilities if requested to do so by their employees or if they were made aware of the benefits of introducing such services as part of 'family-friendly' initiatives in the workplace.

Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to examine the employment potential within the child care sector in Ireland. Numerous reports have highlighted difficulties in investigating the various dimensions of the child care area, particularly here in Ireland, due to the lack of national statistics. In the absence of such data, the research adopted two methods of compiling information.

One method involved an extensive literature review and an examination of census and Labour Force Survey findings. The second method used extensive surveys of child care usage and the needs of parents in this regard. Given the paucity of original data in this area in Ireland, particularly regarding after-school care, the surveys conducted in the course of this research represent a significant contribution to the general research in this field.

The analysis of the social and demographic trends coupled with the survey findings provide clear evidence to support the likelihood of a growth in the employment of personnel in the child care sector. The data identifies an increasing need and demand for child care facilities with a corresponding projection for a growing requirement for child care staff. The realisation of such a projection is, of course, dependent upon a number of variables. The provision of an adequately trained cohort of child care workers to work in the expanding sector and the ability of the services to adapt to the requirement of the new regulations are particularly noteworthy in that regard. The issue of state support for child care provision and in particular the question of subsidising child care providers and/or parents will have a crucial impact on future facilities for the care of children in Ireland.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This study was initiated and funded by ADM with the objective of exploring the employment potential within the childcare area.

Recent years have seen new developments in and changing attitudes to the importance and relevance of childcare in Irish society. The availability of good quality, affordable and accessible childcare services is increasingly receiving greater attention within society. Social trends, as evidenced in other countries, indicate that there will be an increasing demand for childcare services in coming years.

Groups Affected by Availability of Childcare Services

There are four groups which are affected by the availability of and need for childcare services and the related trends for each of those groups.

Children

The group to be directly affected by the availability of childcare services are children. Children receive protection and security while they are in the care of the service providers and also benefit from the socialisation, education and developmental aspects provided.

Trend: There are changes in values placed on childcare services with increasing awareness and emphasis on the social and educational benefits to the child's development.

Women

The second group relates to women. The need for childcare services has been increased by the greater participation of women in the labour force and in particular the number of women with young children. The availability of services to this second group has two dimensions. One relates to economic considerations and the other relates to social equality.

- i. Economically, women have become more active in their financial contribution to the family situation.
- ii. The equality dimension is linked with the availability of childcare services. Inadequate childcare provision is one of the most important factors restricting equal opportunities for women. Parents cannot fulfil their potential in the workplace unless they are sure that their children are in safe and good quality services. Without the provision of adequate childcare services, women are adversely affected in the workforce regarding promotion opportunities, earning power and employment options.

Trend: The significant increase in numbers of women entering, re-entering and remaining in the workforce since the 1970's.

Trend: Changes in marriage patterns which have produced more lone-parent families headed by women.

Trend: The increasing need by women to redress social inequality and to reduce the negative consequences of child bearing for their career.

Families

The third group that can be seen to benefit from childcare services are families. Marriage and family patterns are changing. Increased awareness of the effects of changes in family patterns has resulted in the development of a range of child and family support, prevention and intervention services.

These services are developed with a view to supporting vulnerable families. Childcare services for children in disadvantaged situations have not only positive outcomes for children but are also seen to be cost-effective.

Trend: Changes in family patterns and awareness of social problems have given increased attention to alternative and more cost-effective child and family services.

The Community

The final group to be affected by the availability of services is the community at large. Firstly, the availability of good quality services affects the development of children and as such the future adult members of society. Secondly, in enabling women to work through the creation of childcare services, the labour market benefits from a flexible and adaptive work force.

Trend: Future employment is expected to be part-time and atypical work.

Trend: The increasing recognition by society and policy-makers of the social benefit of attracting women to the labour market.

The Scope of the Study

The availability of childcare services contributes to the job market in a direct way through the employment of childcare workers. This study seeks to explore the employment potential for workers in the childcare area.

Within the context of this research, 'childcare area' relates to the variety of care services for children under school age (pre-school services) and for children of school age (after-school services). These services include childminders, nurseries, crèches and any other pre-school or after school care services which are provided outside the family home or by non-parents within the home.

Overall methodology

The findings of the study are based on

- A) an overview of recent reports and studies at national and EU level, covering developments and current trends in the childcare, employment, equality and family related areas;
- B) estimated indicators and projections of need and demand for childcare services;
- C) surveys of the needs of parents and current use of childcare services in urban and rural environments;
- D) survey of companies regarding their ability to provide workplace crèches for employees;
- E) extensive collaboration with personnel in the childcare, employment, training and trade union sectors.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL TRENDS

Introduction

This section will outline some of the social changes in contemporary Irish society which have brought about an increased need and demand for childcare facilities.

The social changes include:

- the changing attitudes and increased awareness of the value of childcare as a social and educational aspect of child development;
- the use of childcare as a form of family support;
- the changing patterns of family structure;
- the increasing numbers of women in the workforce;
- the expansion in employment within part-time and atypical work and the introduction of family friendly initiatives in the workplace;
- changes in legislation and in policy approaches of government at National and EU levels.

Social Changes and Trends

The Value of Childcare for Children

There are three main ways in which childcare can be regarded as valuable for children.

- A. Childminding.** Childcare can provide a secure and caring environment and a substitute for the physical care and protection provided by parents.
- B. Development.** Childcare contributes to the social, educational and psychological development of the child and offers indirect benefit to parents.
- C. Intervention.** Childcare functions as a means of intervention in addressing and counteracting the problems of children in disadvantaged situations.

The 'childminding' function of childcare is undoubtedly central to an understanding of the overall concept. All forms of childcare provide an element of care regardless of whether their prevailing objective is of a developmental or interventionist nature. Whether children are in the company of their parents or not, there is a basic need for all children to receive adequate care and protection in a secure environment.

Until recently the approach by the state in serving this need has been limited to areas of social disadvantage and in particular to children at risk. This level of state involvement in childcare has been at a minimal and exclusive level.

Following years of discussion and research by government bodies and national groups on the monitoring and standards of childcare services, the Child Care Act of 1991 introduced provisions for the regulation of pre-school services. Part VII of the Act was finally implemented in 1996 and is seen as a major step forward in recognising the importance of childcare and early childhood experiences.

The Regulations facilitate improvements in standards and are likely to lead to an increased awareness by parents and service providers of the importance of 'quality' childcare. It is also expected that these developments will go beyond the remit of the regulations themselves. Parents' growing awareness of their children's needs will increase the provision of more quality services, more qualified staff and in turn, more personnel in child care training.

The developmental aspect of childcare continues to command recognition as a significant number of parents choose services on the basis of their developmental and social programmes. Such choices are principally child-centred and independent of factors relating to work or study. Evidence of this is seen in the expansion of developmental and educational pre-school services.

There has been a growing development in the use of playgroups in recent years. Between 1986 and 1996 the figure for playgroup leaders registered with the IPPA doubled, catering for over 21,000 children. The numbers of naoinra, playgroups conducted through the medium of Irish, have also shown a similar increase in recent years.

It should also be noted that despite this growth, many in the childcare field are critical of the very low level of full-time or publicly funded services in Ireland and particularly so for children under two years of age. The increasing use by parents of playgroups and naoinra indicate the growing awareness of the value of this type of service. Nevertheless, it is arguable whether this is an underestimation of the real or potential figure given the limited choice of quality and affordable services available to parents.

The increase in the numbers of services, such as playgroups, has also been accompanied by other developments in the field such as the increasing number of childcare courses available and the increasing tendency to employ staff with childcare qualifications.

Regardless of how parents view or choose particular childcare services, the main consumers of services are children themselves. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of pre-school exposure in terms of preparation for school, higher educational achievement and in counteracting the ill-effects of social disadvantage. The accepted opinion in many countries is that children benefit from some form of pre-school education! In Ireland, research recently undertaken by the Dublin Institute of Technology reported that four-year-old children who receive pre-school education displayed more social skills than their peers in primary schools².

Early childhood programmes also have implications for the development of the older child. Early intervention strategies for children with social or emotional difficulties can prevent the need for remedial intervention later. Furthermore, at a time when state resources are limited, early childhood programmes can be less costly than more expensive intervention services. While state funding in Ireland for early childcare services is mainly limited to children in circumstances of disadvantage, it is argued that as "all children benefit from quality early experiences"³, all children should enjoy equal treatment and opportunity by the state, irrespective of age.

The trend of placing a higher value on the role of childcare in a child's life within the developmental context is apparent from

- the increasing use by parents of childcare services which are fundamentally aimed at the child's development,
- the expansion in numbers of such services e.g. playgroups, naoinra,
- the use by the state of childcare services for children in disadvantaged circumstances as a means of addressing the children's developmental needs.

The foregoing indicates that

- **a growing importance is accorded to childcare services which incorporate a developmental programme and,**
- **there is an increase in the demand for and availability of quality services as an outcome of the introduction of State regulation of pre-school services,**
- **a corresponding growth in the employment of childcare workers to accommodate the enhanced supply of quality services and the employment of childcare training personnel will occur.**

¹ Moss, P. Work, Family and the Care of Children: Equality & Responsibility. Children & Society

² Hayes, N., O'Flaherty, J. & Kernan, M.: A Window on Early Education in Ireland. Early Childhood Research Centre, DIT, Dublin 1997

³ Hayes, N.: Organisation and Support of Childcare in Ireland. Irish Journal of Feminist Studies, Vol. 1, Issue 2, 1996

The Use of Childcare as a Form of Family Support

There is a growing recognition by those associated with child and family welfare of the importance of support services to families who are in disadvantaged situations or undergoing periods of serious social or economic stress. Generally government policies directed at alleviating poverty which gives rise to family difficulties, are in the form of initiatives dealing with primary issues such as income maintenance, health and housing. There are other secondary issues which policies can also address and in so doing can contribute to tackling the primary problems concerning family poverty in the longer term.

Childcare services, whereby parents are offered assistance with the care of their child or children, relates to policies concerned with this category of secondary issues. These services in effect offer the parents 'time out' during the day from the pressures of combining the demands of their children's needs with other family responsibilities and problems. This period of 'time out' does not as such deal directly with addressing income or housing issues but it does offer an opportunity to the parents to deal with these issues themselves if they so choose.

There is increasing awareness of the consequence of high social stress for the parent, the child and family relationships. Access to family support services, and particularly to childcare services can alleviate or reduce stress not only for parents but very often, and more importantly, for children by removing them from difficult and impoverished environments even for a short period in the day. These childcare services can also act as a discreet monitoring mechanism to ensure that children in these situations are not undergoing anxieties, neglect or injury as a result of family circumstances and troubles.

When needs arise for the state to intervene in family situations it is a basic condition that children and their parents are respected as an integrated unit. This is generally regarded as a common starting point and objective of initiatives in favour of children's rights within the context of a stable family. If the family needs support, it is important that the assistance is given with respect to the integrity of the family. Section 3 of the Child Care Act, 1991 states that, "a health board shall have regard to the principle that it is generally in the best interests of a child to be brought up in his own family". While it is widely held that separating children from their parents may be the best option for a few, however, it frequently introduces another uncertainty into their lives and places them at further risk of emotional and psychological setbacks⁴.

The trend within social services is one where increasing attention is being given to prevention and support policies as well as to policies of intervention. The most extreme form of intervention for the child is when the home situation becomes so serious that the child is taken into care and separated from the family. The potential negative effects on children in residential care or in placement situations are well documented. Residential care is not an ideal environment for preparation for adulthood and care placements within family environments can also be unstable and lead to children experiencing multiple moves. Both situations can have serious adverse effects on the child's development⁵.

In a society where living with natural parents is the norm, the stigma associated with children who do otherwise is very evident. Children who are taken into care not only suffer from such exposure, but their parents are also affected and face another stress factor in their already troubled lives⁶.

As already mentioned, intervention as a means of dealing with family crisis is recognised as being inevitable and preferable in some situations. However, given some of the uncertainties inherent in residential and foster care placements, policies to sustain and support parents are ideally more socially and economically effective⁷. The provision of childcare services as a means by which families and children are supported at particularly stressful times in their lives is an example of how early and often low key preventative measures may pre-empt family breakdown or crises. Childcare services in these situations may not be the only answer to family problems but can act as a very welcome relief to families under stress at a critical time. This respite may be all that is needed for some families to enhance their home environment so that the risk of their children going into care and the family breaking up at a later stage is greatly reduced. Furthermore, where public childcare services are widely available, risks of stigma to both children and families can be avoided.

It should also be noted that childcare services not only act as a form of respite for these families but also enable the parents the opportunity to undertake adult education, vocational training, parenting and self-development classes.

⁴ Madge, N. *Children and Residential Care in Europe*, NCB 1994

⁵ Holman, B., *Putting Families First*, Mac Millan, London, 1988. ⁶ Stroud J., *Thirteen Penny Stamps*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1971.

⁷ Cannan, C., *Changing Families. Changing Welfare 1992*, Harvester Wheatsheaf of U.K.

Significant changes in family patterns in recent years have resulted in new forms of family stress and accentuated the need for family support services. The family in Ireland is conventionally regarded as a married man and woman with children. Recently, however, our concept of the family has been challenged. One of the more important changes that has occurred relating to families is the growth of lone parenthood. There are many definitions of lone parenthood. In this instance it is understood to relate to the custodial parent who is not cohabiting and where the children are below a conventional age of labour market and financial independence, and resident in the family home⁸.

A dramatic rise in births outside marriage in recent years together with the drop in adoptions has given rise to a sharp increase in the numbers of unmarried mothers with children. In 1991, there were over 44,000 lone-parent families with at least one child under 5. This was an increase of over 21% on the previous five years⁹. In 1981, the number of births occurring to single mothers was over 5% whereas by 1996, this figure had risen to 24.8%.¹⁰

These changes are particularly apparent within the teenage age group. Although the overall picture of teenage births is one of decline, the majority of unmarried teenage mothers now keep their babies, thus giving rise to an increase in numbers of non-married teenagers with babies (93% of teenage mothers in 1994 compared with 60% in 1984 kept their babies).¹¹

Although it is not reasonable to view children in lone-parent families to be in any way more socially disadvantaged than children in two-parent families, and in some cases there are clear advantages to children in one-parent units, nevertheless lone-parent families are particularly at risk of poverty¹² more so where the woman has the role of sole breadwinner for the family. Research has shown that women earn less than men. It follows that many working single mothers will have substantially lower income levels than two-parent families. This is of particular concern in Ireland where lone mothers are less likely to be employed than couple mothers, unlike most other countries in Europe. There are many reasons put forward to explain this phenomenon, but the absence of suitable childcare provision is particularly crucial.¹³

Lone-parents are often faced with greater challenges. However, the disadvantages suffered by lone-parents in terms of income and other related factors (e.g. housing etc.) can be positively affected through social policies put in place to support their position.

In summary:

- 1. There is a growing recognition by state and voluntary agencies of the need for and importance of family support services as a means of preventing the following:**
 - serious family crisis and breakdown,
 - children being removed from their families and neighbourhoods,
 - impairments in children's social/emotional development.
- 2. There is an acceptance of the view that a wider availability of childcare services to the public rather than one reserved for special and stigmatised exceptions is important for families.**
- 3. An increasing value is placed on childcare services as an element in family support. Prevention policies will undoubtedly give rise to increases in the provision of childcare services.**

The Changing Patterns Of The Family Structure

This section is concerned with the changing patterns of family structure and the consequences of these changes regarding the need for childcare services. The main areas considered will relate to

- the growth of lone parents,
- evolving parental roles and the closer connection between the family and home and the world of work.

The growth of lone parents

One of the most significant trends in Irish society with respect to family life has been the decline in fertility and the accompanying decline in dependency levels. Between the early 1980s and the mid 1990s, the total number of births dropped by more than a third¹⁴. It is anticipated that for the coming years fertility rates will remain more or less stable.

⁸ McCashin, A., *Lone Parents in the Republic of Ireland*. ESRI, Dublin 1993. ⁹ McCashin, A., *Lone Mothers In Ireland*. Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin 1996. ¹⁰ CSO ¹¹ Eastern Health Board, *Child Care and Family Support Services in 1995, Review of Adequacy*. ¹² Callan & Nolan: *Poverty & Policy*. ESRI, Dublin 1994. ¹³ Working Group on Childcare Facilities for working parents: Report to the Minister for Equality & Law Reform, 1994. ¹⁴ Fahey, T., & Fitzgerald, J., *Welfare Implications of Demographic Trends*. Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin 1997.

Of equal importance to this study is the increase in the number of births outside marriage. This is referred to in the previous section concerning the growing numbers of lone and specifically teenage mothers. The previous section refers to the need for childcare services as a support for children of lone and disadvantaged parents. This section highlights the growing need for childcare services by families from all sectors of the community as a result of changing family structures.

The demand for childcare services will increase as more marriages end in dissolution and separation, and as increasing numbers of family arrangements are outside of traditional family structures. Lone parenthood resulting from marital breakdown, convergent with international experience, has also been increasing significantly. The numbers of persons 'separated'¹⁵ rose from approximately 14,000 to over 87,800 between 1981 and 1996.

Conventional social attitudes have changed and new family formations carry less stigma. A reason cited for the increase in the number of teenage mothers is the decreasing social stigma surrounding pregnant single women which previously forced many to marry, travel to the UK to have their children or place their babies for adoption. Adoptions, for example, as a percentage of non-marital births were over 70% in 1971. This had dropped to 1% by 1996.

Changing parental roles and the closer connection between the family and home and the world of work

Variations in family roles is another factor to be considered when examining changing family patterns. Conventional family roles of the father as breadwinner and the mother as carer for the children have begun to change over the past two decades. The reality for the modern family, is that the mother is also likely to be employed in the formal labour market.

Legislation today reflects such realities. The changes in family roles, particularly as women take on additional functions as they enter the labour force, means that parenthood and other domestic responsibilities are increasingly being shared by both partners.

Owing to the greater involvement of women in employment, new attitudes are emerging. Parents from all backgrounds more readily turn to others for the daily care of their children and some employers are giving recognition to the importance of family friendly practices to ensure a consistent workforce. These measures also include the provision of childcare facilities.

Trend

- the increase in numbers of births outside marriage and marital breakdowns gives rise to more households headed by women,
- parental roles within the family are less segregated as mothers increasingly work outside the home, and this has led to
- an extension of the involvement of others in traditional parental responsibilities such as child care, and
- a greater awareness and pressure on the state and the labour market to facilitate that involvement.

Both these developments infer that the demand for childcare services will be positively affected with a corresponding growth in the employment of childcare staff.

The Increasing Numbers of Women Entering, Re-entering and Remaining in the Workforce

Various changes in society have given rise to factors which have led to more women working outside the home. These factors include:

- increased financial pressures has meant that a double income is imperative for many households;
- more women-headed households (the implications of which were previously discussed);
- higher levels of educational and training participation by women with corresponding levels of aspirations and expectations by women themselves to use their skills and knowledge in the workforce;
- social isolation experienced by homemakers with the emergence of a more secular and individualistic society in a modern capitalist state.

There are many other factors underlying women's increased labour force participation, and the trend and the reality is that more women are in paid employment. Many countries have reported women, especially women with small children, entering the formal labour market in unprecedented numbers, at a rate far

¹⁵ "Separated" includes: deserted, marriages annulled, legal separations, divorced and other separations.

greater than men. The ratio, on average, of women to men in the economically active population has almost doubled over the past 20 years¹⁶. In Ireland, the number of women in the labour force increased from 275,600 in 1991 to 488,000 in 1996.

Although women have always participated in the labour force, it has been mostly on a part-time, often irregular and hidden basis. In the majority of European countries today, more than 50% of women in the ages between 20 and 49 years are employed and in the Scandinavian countries and in Eastern Europe, the figures are over 70%¹⁷. It should be noted however that Ireland has the lowest rate in the OECD of women working outside the home. The Irish figure of 35% contrasts with Sweden's 76%, Denmark's 74% and the UK's 64%¹⁸. Nevertheless, participation figures for Ireland are increasing dramatically and will probably follow European trends.

The following are the key factors influencing women's increasing employment rates:

- Where there is a boom in the economy, job prospects for women are positively affected.
- Government policies and initiatives being used to promote female participation in the workforce.
- Changes in employment structures in favour of service industries have meant more opportunities for women.
- Demographic changes have resulted in a heightened recognition of women as an important source of new and skilled workers.
- Fertility control by women resulting in smaller families has led to a corresponding choice in terms of employment.
- Enhanced sharing of responsibilities between society and the family system, particularly in regard to child care.
- More women are entering tertiary education and training.
- Major improvements in working conditions have made employment more attractive for many women.
- The growth in part-time and atypical work makes it possible for more women to work.

Trends suggest that

- **there is a growing need for women to work,**
- **increasing factors exist which make it attractive and possible for women to work.**

These trends, indicating an increased participation of women in the labour force, including to a point women with children, imply that there will be an accompanying growing need for childcare services, which in turn implies increased employment prospects within the childcare sector.

Improved Working Conditions & Part-time and Atypical Work

A further exploration of factors underlying women's increased participation in the workforce illustrates the potential demand for childcare services. The following trends are becoming more significant in their impact on the demand and provision of childcare services:

1. Improvements in working conditions, particularly with the introduction of family-friendly initiatives in the workplace.
2. The reliance by employers on atypical and part-time work.

The workplace has over the past decade become more worker friendly. Family-friendly initiatives (which may also be described as being worker's rights or basic human rights) include:

- pregnancy, maternity and paternity provision,
- family leave,
- childcare support,
- flexible working arrangements,
- career break schemes.

¹⁶ Women: Looking Beyond 200. United Nations, New York, 1995. ¹⁷ Ulla Bjornberg, U.: Proceedings from Seminar on Changing Directions in Family Policies in Eastern and Western Europe-December 1990. European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences.

¹⁸ EEA: Introducing Family Friendly Initiatives in the Workplace, EEA, Dublin 1996.

When considering the provision of childcare as a family-friendly initiative, there are several options open to employers. The following have been identified by the Equal Opportunities Commission in the UK¹⁹:

- workplace nurseries/crèches;
- buying in places in established nurseries/crèches;
- partnership nursery with other employers/local authorities/voluntary organisations;
- childminding schemes;
- out-of-school schemes;
- holiday play schemes;
- childcare payments;
- childcare vouchers.

The above are not mutually exclusive but will depend on resources and the needs of staff. Childcare provision by employers also positively contributes to the working environment of staff and, in turn, the company.

Trends

- **the expansion of atypical and part-time work appears to be predominantly taken up by women.**
- **increased initiatives which provide incentives for women to enter and remain in the workforce, including the provision of childcare services means that there is an increased demand for childcare services and in turn opportunities for employment in the childcare area.**

Legislation and Policy Approaches at National Level.

Reference has previously been made to emerging national policies which seek to address gender inequalities which in turn give rise to initiatives including those relating to childcare services. However, national policies differ despite appearing to have common objectives. The differences between gender and equality policies in countries frequently result from

1. the impact of the individual economies and the demand for women workers in the labour market,
2. differences in societal conceptions of women's roles within those countries.

Changes have occurred in legislation and policy approaches at national level which address equal opportunities and childcare issues. Of particular significance has been Ireland's membership of the EU which can be seen to have accelerated the process of change in Irish society regarding women, work and childcare.

The following is an outline of developments in EU and national legislation and programmes which indicate changes in policies regarding women and the growing involvement of the state in childcare provision.

Policy Developments From The 1970's.

- One of the most notable changes to take place in Irish legislation concerning women and work in the last two decades was the removal of the Marriage Bar in the Civil service in 1973.
- The Social Welfare (Unemployment Benefit) Regulations, 1973 provided women working in private domestic service and agriculture with the same right to unemployment benefit as is provided to other workers.
- A Social Assistance Allowance for unmarried mothers was introduced under the Social Welfare Act, 1973. This was later incorporated into the Lone Parent's Allowance.
- In 1974, the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act, 1974 was introduced which established principles of "equal pay for like work" and "equal pay for work of equal value" for all employees including temporary, part-time, casual and seasonal workers.
- AnCo (now FÁS) operated its first Return to Work courses in the mid 1970s for women who had not been in employment for a number of years.

¹⁹ Equal Opportunities Commission: *Work & Family Good Practice Guide, CHILDCARE: Getting started.* (Undated)

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- The Equal Treatment Directive was issued in 1976 by the EU.
 - In 1977, the Employment Equality Act, 1977 was passed which covered areas of discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status in recruitment for employment, in training and in conditions of employment and promotion. The Employment Equality Agency was also established under the Act to monitor the operation of this Act and the 1974 Act mentioned above.
 - The Unfair Dismissals Act, 1977 introduced a prohibition on dismissals due to pregnancy.
 - The Maternity Protection of Employees Act, 1981 provides for the right to paid maternity leave and also the prohibition of dismissal during maternity leave. This legislation was further strengthened in 1994.
 - In 1983 the EU Commission proposed that a directive be issued by the EU Council in relation to parental leave and leave for family reasons.
 - Married women became entitled to the same rate of benefit over the same length of time as all other beneficiaries under the Social Welfare (No 2) Act, 1985 and the Social Welfare Act, 1986.
 - The European Commission Childcare Network was established in 1986 under the Action Programmes on Equal Opportunities. The Recommendation covers four areas for Member States to consider and on which to take initiatives:
 - a) provision of childcare services for parents in or seeking employment, education/training;
 - b) special leave for working parents;
 - c) the environment and organisation of work to be responsive to the needs of employees with children;
 - d) the sharing of work and family responsibilities between women and men.
 - In 1990, the Second Commission on the Status of Women was funded by the Government to make recommendations concerning improving participation on equal terms with men in 'economic, social, political and cultural life'. The Report which followed in January 1993, paid special attention to issues such as 'Women in the Home', 'Women and Work', 'Women and Childcare'.
 - The NOW initiative, adopted by the EU Commission in 1990, aimed at promoting equal opportunities for women in the field of employment and vocational training. The initiative was designed to take account of the difficulties women face in the labour market, particularly for those women in disadvantaged areas and in long-term unemployment. Measures included support for women who wish to create their own enterprise and assistance with childcare costs.
 - The Child Care Act, 1991 outlined the responsibilities of the Health Boards in providing supports to children who are regarded 'at risk' or disadvantaged and to promote children's welfare with the provision of family support services. Part VII of the Act refers to the role of the Health Boards regarding pre-school services. Regulations have been introduced by the Department of Health and Children in 1996 covering standards in all pre-school services including inspections to be undertaken by the Health Boards. Childminders looking after three or fewer children are not subject to requirements of the Act.
 - Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1992.
 - The EU Council of Ministers adopted the Recommendation on Childcare in 1992. See Appendix 2.1 for a summary of the Recommendation.
 - The European Council Directive, issued in 1993, introduced measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant and breastfeeding workers, and workers who recently gave birth.
 - In 1994, the European Commission set up a Network on Families and Work.
 - In 1994, the Working Group on Childcare Facilities for Working Parents published a report outlining recommendations to the Government regarding childcare provision. This group was established by the Minister for Labour who responded to the report by creating the Equality Childcare Initiative for the provision of childcare services in disadvantaged areas. One of the main aims of the initiative was to assist those mothers and fathers who were socially marginalised to participate in employment, education and training.
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- In 1994, the Early Start Programme was introduced by the Department of Education which involved the provision of a pre-school service within the primary education system. The programme established services for children in designated disadvantaged areas.
 - The Operational Programme for Local Urban and Rural Development (1994-1999) includes sub-programmes involving City and County Enterprise Boards and Area Partnership Companies to support measures which would develop childcare strategies and facilities in their areas. CEBs and Partnership Companies also provide support and advice for people who wish to establish enterprises, and childcare facilities as enterprises.
 - A national code of practice on sexual harassment was published in 1994 in accordance with the European Commission Recommendation and Code of Practice of 1991.
 - The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs has supported programmes relating to women's and lone parent groups. Some of this support has involved funding for crèches during programme courses. In 1994, the Department allocated funding for a number of Family Resource Centres which involved provision of childcare facilities for women from disadvantaged areas to enable them participate in adult education and training courses.
 - FÁS has given considerable attention to women and work and childcare issues through its programme of training courses and community employment schemes. In 1995, it was estimated that 770 workers were involved in childcare projects alone. This figure does not take into account the numbers involved in other projects which involve a childcare element.
 - In 1994 and 1995, the Department of Equality and Law Reform included in its budget allocations a number of childcare projects. Area Development Management Ltd. was contracted to implement and monitor this funding. Projects were confined to the areas of disadvantage as defined within the Area Based Partnership/Local Community Group areas. The criteria for funding of projects insisted that due consideration be given to the impact on the participation level of parents in education, training or work.
 - Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness, December 1996, is the national agreement by Government and Social Partners to outline a strategic approach to lead the Irish economy into the 21st Century. In this framework childcare is referenced as a significant element in the promotion of gender equality with the objective of developing a strategy for the provision of services. It is also stated therein that the emergence of such a framework will be in tandem with the support for family friendly initiatives in employment. The commitment in Partnership 2000 would appear to have the most far-reaching potential for the development of childcare in Ireland to date since it contains a commitment to develop a national framework. Furthermore, it is a commitment which is being implemented.

It should be noted that while recognition is given to the introduction of Government and EU policies to date, criticism exists of initiatives that fall short in response to current developments and needs. While many regulations offer the potential for improvement in conditions and supports for female participation in the workplace, state resources are needed to implement such legislation. However, despite the absence of co-ordinated and concrete resources for many policies in the past, the establishment of a more integrated approach at a practical and policy level is underway.

It would appear that there is a growing trend in policy in recent years at both National and European level to introduce legislation and initiatives which aim to

- address issues of inequality,
- reconcile work and family responsibilities,
- increase education and training opportunities.

Changing societal views give rise to initiatives which indicate the likelihood of a growing participation of women in the workforce. The increased participation of female workers in turn indicates a continued need to address issues of reconciling work and family responsibilities, including the need and demand for childcare services.

Table 2.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 2

TREND	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	JOB POTENTIAL
<p>The increasing use by parents of childcare services fundamentally aimed at the child's development; The expansion in numbers of such developmental services; The use by the state of childcare services for children in disadvantaged circumstances as a means of addressing the children's developmental vulnerability.</p>	<p>A growing importance will be accorded to childcare services which provide a developmental programme; There will be an increase in the demand for and availability of quality services as an outcome of the introduction of State regulation of pre-school services.</p>	<p>There will be a corresponding growth in the employment of childcare workers to accommodate the enhanced supply of quality services, and the employment of childcare training personnel.</p> <p>JOB POTENTIAL ↑</p>
<p>The increasing awareness of the impact of high social stress on the parent, the child and family relationships; The significant changes in family patterns including the growth of lone parenthood resulting in new forms of family stress and accentuating the need for family support services; The increasing attention given to prevention and support policies as well as to policies of intervention.</p>	<p>Enhanced attention by state and voluntary agencies to the need for and importance of family support services (such as childcare services) as a means of preventing serious family crisis and children experiencing stress and neglect. Childcare services valued as an important element in family support and prevention policy by state and voluntary agencies are likely to give rise to increases in the provision of childcare services.</p>	<p>Childcare services valued as an important element in family support and prevention policy by state and voluntary agencies are likely to give rise to an increase in the provision of childcare services.</p> <p>JOB POTENTIAL ↑</p>
<p>The growth of lone parents; The newly evolving parental roles; The closer connection between the family and home and the world of work.</p>	<p>There will be an extension of the involvement of others in traditional parental responsibilities such as child care, and There will be a greater awareness and pressure on the state and the labour market in facilitating that involvement.</p>	<p>The demand for childcare services is likely to be positively affected by a corresponding growth in the employment of childcare staff.</p> <p>JOB POTENTIAL ↑</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY continued

TREND	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	JOB POTENTIAL
<p>The growing need for women to work; Government policies and initiatives to influence and promote female participation in the workforce; The changes in the industrial structure of employment in favour of services to the advantage of female employment; The demographic changes resulting in heightened recognition of women as being an important source of new and skilled workers; Fertility control by women resulting in smaller families and leading to a corresponding control by women of their employment; The improvements in working conditions making employment more attractive and possible for many women; The growth in part-time and atypical work leading to positive implications for future female employment.</p>	<p>An on-going enhanced sharing of responsibilities between the society at large (public and private) and the family system, particularly in regard to child care. The progressive growing participation of women in the labour force, including women with children.</p>	<p>There will be a growing need for childcare services subsequent to the increasing participation of mothers in the workforce.</p> <p>JOB POTENTIAL ↑</p>
<p>A growth in policies in recent years at both national and European level to introduce legislation and initiatives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. aiming to address issues of inequality in employment, in allocation of resources within households and family property, and in social welfare entitlements and 2. offering supports to women and men in reconciling their work and family responsibilities and, in education and training courses. 	<p>A move in Irish policy away from the state 'non-interference' in family life through legislation covering supports e.g. to lone parents etc. and regulations for services concerning child care.</p>	<p>A greater openness by the state in the equal provision of services, such as childcare facilities, to families is likely to lead to an increase in the numbers of childcare staff employed by the public sector.</p> <p>JOB POTENTIAL ↑</p>

CHAPTER 3: INDICATORS

This chapter outlines a variety of socio-economic and demographic indicators which can be used to determine the level of 'need' for childcare provision in Ireland. Such measures indicate both the potential demand for services and the potential for employment within the childcare area. It should be noted that the socio-economic indicators used can only approximate potential use of childcare services and the potential for employment.

Before examining the indicators, it may be initially expedient to refer briefly to points at issue relating to the understanding of and reasons for the use of 'need' as a measurement as opposed to 'demand'.

DEMAND

Difficulties arise in attempts to measure need by examining the level of demand that exists for a particular service. To overcome such difficulties a distinction is drawn between latent and explicit demand. 'Explicit' demand relates to services made available by the market ('provision') and used by parents. 'Latent' demand takes account of parents' actual desires or preferences for services beyond those provided by the market. The term 'demand', as commonly used, often reflects market forces and can underestimate the preferences of the users.

Problems also exist in relation to 'demand' when information is not precise, uniform or quantifiable. There are difficulties for example in using 'provision of services' as a measurement of demand, particularly in Ireland. Until an extensive state registration and central database on childcare services is established, there is a major lack of standardised information regarding provision. The recently introduced Child Care (pre-school Services) Regulations 1996 will to some extent address the issues of a state database.

Furthermore, the information that does exist can be conflicting as it relates either to the numbers of children enrolled or the number of places available in a service, and is currently based on state provision excluding a substantial segment of the private sector²⁰. While information relating to the private sector is compiled by a number of different childcare organisations, no national database currently exists. There are also issues surrounding how data is collected, how concepts are defined, and the analysis and presentation of material.

An additional problem in using data relating to *demand* is that it is not only dependent on the availability of services by the market and the take-up of services by users, but more importantly it is dependent on parents' exposure to particular types of services. If parents are unaware of the existence or the benefits for example of the playgroup, they may never express a demand for such a service. It can be argued that if parents are better informed, their demand for services will increase. A lack of information relating to demand within this context would constitute a further underestimation.

INDICATORS OF NEED

A number of indices can be used in attempting to measure need which relate to changes in the following:

1. Population
2. Marriage and Lone Parenthood
3. Women in the Labour Force and Education.

Population

As in general population projections, migration, fertility and mortality rates are normally taken into account. However, for the purpose of this current research, the focus will be on the child population, fertility, and child mortality rates. 'Child' is here defined as all children under 10 years of age.

The preliminary total of population from the Census of Population 1996 was 3,621,035 persons. This was a marginal increase on the 1991 figure of 3,525,719. However, the 1991 figure may be considered particularly low, which is considered to be mainly due to the surge in emigration between 1986 and 1991 together with a sharp fall in the rate of natural increase.

²⁰ Even when the recently introduced regulations are actualised, and providers notify the Health Boards of their services, problems with (a) and (b) above will remain.

The following table outlines the child population with a breakdown for 0-4 year and 5-9 year olds. These two age groups have been selected in that 0-4 year olds are those likely to be in need of pre-school services, while the 5-9 year olds are likely to be in need of the after-school services. It will be observed from the table that figures between 1986 and 1991 also decreased as comparable with the overall population figures during this period and possibly for similar migratory reasons as mentioned above.

Table 1. Child population (0-4 and 5-9 year olds) between 1961 and 1996.

AGE GROUP	1961	1966	1971	1979	1981	1986	1991	1996
	THOUSAND							
0-4	300.7	315.9	315.7	343.5	353.0	324.1	273.7	250.4
5-9	287.7	298.9	316.9	350.1	349.5	350.7	318.5	282.9
TOTAL	588.4	614.8	632.6	693.6	702.5	674.8	592.2	533.3

Fertility

In spite of an increase in the annual number of births between 1961 and 1981, there has been a considerable decline in fertility rates. The drop in fertility rates is even more evident since 1980, despite increases in the numbers of women in the most fertile age groups, 15-49 years. The following table shows the average annual birth for each Intercensal Period since 1956.

Table 2. Number of average annual births per 1,000 of average population

Intercensal Period	Births per 1,000 of Average Population
1956-1961	21.2
1961-1966	21.9
1966-1971	21.3
1976-1979	21.6
1979-1981	21.5
1981-1986	19.1
1986-1991	15.7
1991-1996	14.0

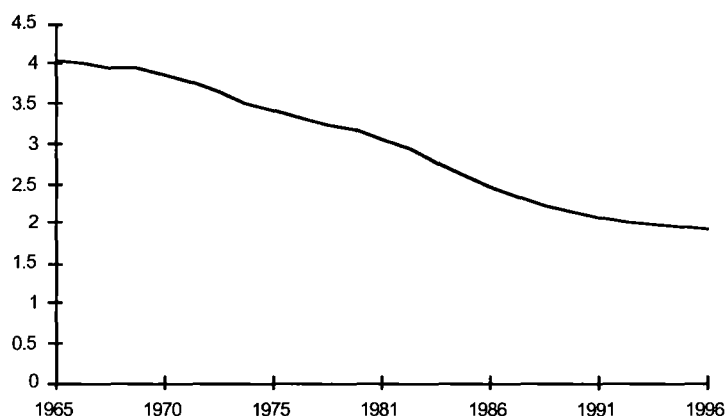
Table 3 outlines the female population by age groups between 15-44 years, and highlights the progressive increases in recent years.

Table 3. Female population classified by age (15-44 years) between 1961 and 1996.

AGE GROUP	1961	1966	1971	1979	1981	1986	1991	1996
	THOUSAND							
15-19	113.5	126.0	131.0	155.1	159.8	161.2	163.6	167.7
20-24	77.6	90.6	105.3	130.5	135.7	142.3	130.1	143.5
25-29	73.1	74.3	85.3	117.8	121.7	129.4	125.7	126.2
30-34	77.5	72.8	74.5	107.4	113.7	120.5	125.9	129.9
35-39	85.2	77.8	73.6	86.7	94.5	113.3	119.1	128.0
40-44	85.5	82.4	76.3	77.6	80.6	93.8	111.8	120.0
TOTAL	512.4	523.9	546	675.1	706	760.5	776.2	815.3

Figure 1 outlines the total fertility rate (TFR) in Ireland between 1965 and 1996. For the age group 25-39, fertility rates are in decline. Fertility in the younger age group 15-24 years was highest in the early seventies and with the exception of 1990-91, has since been in decline. Although, there has been minor increases between 1994 (1.86) and 1996 (1.91), the rate is generally considered to be below the level at which the population would replace itself (2.1) in the long term, ignoring migration.

Figure 1. Total Fertility Rate, 1965-1996



According to the Central Statistics Office, it is assumed that TFR will decrease at a constant rate to approximately 1.5 in 2006 or to 1.8 in 2026²¹. It is unclear whether this trend, which appears to be likely for the short to medium term, will remain constant in the long term.

An interesting link between fertility, child numbers and the need for childcare services is that although a decreasing child population may infer a corresponding decrease in the need for services, the reverse is also likely to be the case. The pattern in all EU countries (except Finland), is that the more children women have, the less likely they are to work outside the home and the more likely they are to look after their children themselves. As mentioned later in this chapter on working mothers, mothers are more likely to work with one or two children than with three or more. It is significantly less likely that women with three or more children will work outside the home.

²¹ Two Sets of fertility assumptions were formulated based on high and low variants.

With fewer children, mothers may 'demand' more childcare services as they are more likely to be in employment. However, the argument is also put forward that due to a limited supply of affordable quality services, and given that many women work in part-time and poorer paid jobs there is a cut off point when it is no longer economically viable to work. In this instance there may be a significant need for childcare support, but it is unlikely to be expressed or monitored.

Migration

Shifts in population are not solely due to natural increases and decreases. Significant population changes in Ireland can be linked to migration patterns. In the years between 1971 and 1979, the turn round in the flow of migration contributed significantly to the expansion in the population. This reversal was linked to the unusually large numbers of Irish emigrants, particularly in Britain, who returned home; and secondly, the increase in job opportunities as a result of Irish industrial policy and Ireland's entry to the EEC in 1973.

However, there has been a constant rate of emigration in the 1980s. This again may reflect the numbers of emigrants overseas returning home, together with the marked improvements in the Irish economy. The following table presents annual average rates of net migration.

Table 4. Average annual rate of Estimated Net Migration per 1,000 of population.

YEAR	1956- 1961	1961- 1966	1966- 1971	1971- 1979	1979- 1981	1981- 1986	1986- 1991	1991- 1996
RATE	-14.8	-5.7	-3.7	+4.3	-0.7	-4.1	-7.6	+0.2

Mobility is an important factor to be taken into account when devising a way of approximating childcare demand. For example, during 1971-79, almost 44% of returning emigrants were female, many with skills acquired abroad and who may have wished to work on their return²². Furthermore, a large number of returnees were parents with children. With both parents available to work, there was also the likelihood of an increased need for childcare provision for their children.

Marriage and Lone Parenthood

The numbers of marriages is steadily declining in recent years (Table 5), and the most significant changes are seen in the age group 15-24 year olds. Table 6 outlines the numbers of actual and assumed percentages of married females for the period 1986-2006.

Table 5. Marriages per 1,000 of the population, 1989-95²³

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Marriages	18,174	17,838	17,441	16,636	15,728	16,297	15,623

²² The Inter-Departmental Working Party on Women's Affairs & Family Law Reform: *Irish Women: Agenda for Political Action*. Govt Publications, Feb 1985.

²³ CSO *Statistical Abstract 1996*, Jan. 1997.

Table 6. Percentage of females married classified by age group, 1986-2006²⁴

AGE GROUP	ACTUAL		ASSUMED		
	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
15-19	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2
20-24	21.8	13.2	8.0	7.0	7.0
25-29	62.6	54.1	48.0	46.0	43.0
30-34	79.5	75.4	71.0	68.0	66.0
35-39	84.3	81.2	78.0	75.0	74.0
40-44	84.3	82.9	80.0	77.0	75.0
45-49	81.3	81.8	81.0	79.0	77.0
50-54	75.7	78.1	78.0	78.0	78.0
55-59	66.9	70.9	73.0	74.0	74.0
60-64	56.4	60.0	63.0	64.0	64.0
65 and over	28.6	30.4	31.0	32.0	32.0

The low numbers of females who are marrying in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 affects the numbers of births that occur within marriage. Table 7 shows a consistent increase in the numbers of births outside marriage from 12.8% in 1989 to 22.2% in 1995. Table 8 also demonstrates the decreasing number of births within marriage to mothers under 20 years of age.

Table 7. Births within and outside marriage, 1989-95

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Births within Marriage	45,347	45,277	43,806	42,258	39,634	38,024	37,742	50,390
Births outside Marriage	6,671	7,767	8,912	9,299	9,827	9,904	10,788	12,484

²⁴CSO Population & Labour Force Projections 1996-2026

Figure 2. Births outside Marriage as % of Total Births

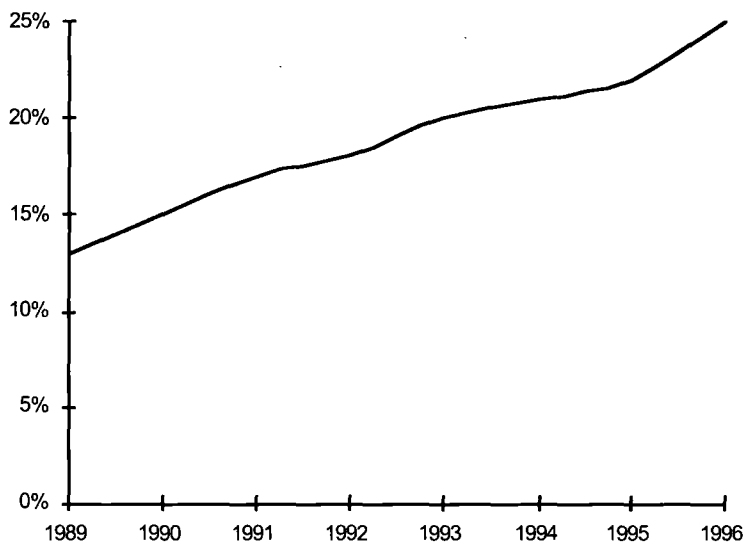


Table 8. Births within marriage to mothers under 20 years of age, 1989-1995.

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Births	413	396	301	283	219	157	130

The majority of births to mothers under 25 years of age now occur outside marriage. The decline in marriages is primarily evident in the under 25 year old age group. One of the primary reasons suggested for the declining marriage rate among younger women has been linked to the increasing numbers of higher educated women²⁵.

Women in the Labour Force and Education

Women's labour participation has increased dramatically throughout the European Union over the past decade and women have demonstrated a growing commitment to the labour market particularly during the core childrearing years. Table 9 indicates the rising trend in all member states.

Table 9. Women's labour force participation EU comparisons (in 000s) 1975-95²⁶

COUNTRY	1975	1985	1995
Ireland	19.5	32.6	39.9
UK	34.3	47.9	52.4
France	31.7	45.7	48.2
Fr Germany	29.2	40.6	47.7
Denmark	35.9	58.7	57.5
Belgium	24.4	35.9	40.5
Greece	-	34.2	35.5
Spain	-	37.4	35.4
Italy	17.8	32.4	33.9
Luxembourg	22.0	34.4	35.9
Netherlands	16.8	34.1	48.3
Portugal	-	42.8	49.5

²⁵ Fahey, T. & Fitzgerald, J.: *Welfare Implications of Demographic Trends*. Page 109. Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin 1997.

²⁶ Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, CSO

In Ireland, between 1991 and 1996, the total number of women in the labour force grew by 26% while the number of married women in the labour force grew by over 28%.

In 1961, there were approximately 282,000 women aged 15 years and over in the labour force, of whom over 24,000 were married. These figures represented nearly 30% of the total female population over 15 years of age and almost 5% of married women.

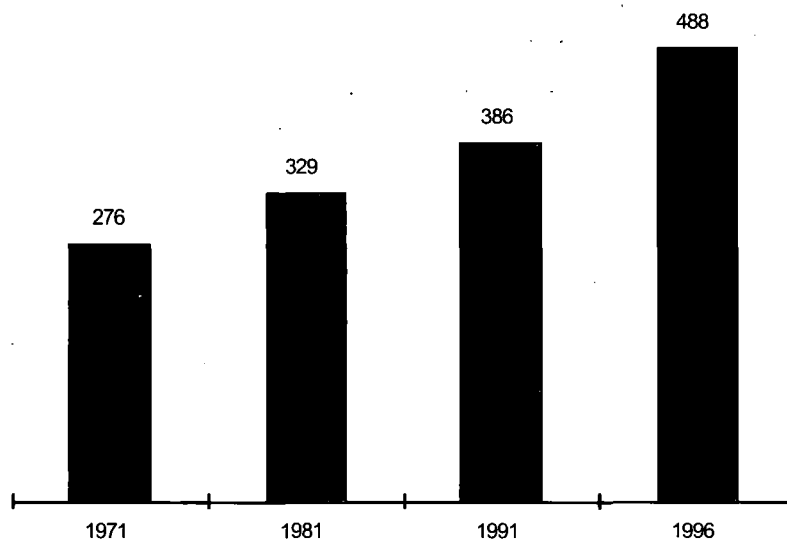
In 1996, there was an estimated 488,000 females in the labour force which represented 41.1% of the female population over 15 years of age and nearly 60% of women in the 15-44 year age group. 241,400 were married women which was equivalent to nearly 35% of all married women and almost 50% of the total female labour force ²⁷.

Table 10. Women at Work in Ireland, 1971-1996²⁸

YEAR	Single	Married	Other*	TOTAL
1971	212,600	38,300	24,600	275,500
1981	211,000	102,600	15,600	329,200
1991	191,700	173,800	20,800	386,300
1996	216,200	241,400	30,500	488,100

*Separated, divorced and widowed.

Figure 3. Total number of women at work in Ireland (in 000s), 1971-1996



The increase in women's employment between 1991 and 1996 has been almost equivalent to the combined increases of the previous 20 years, and growth has accelerated more rapidly than anticipated (see Table 10). Although Ireland still has the lowest participation rate of married females in the EU, it is assumed that the 'catching up' process will continue.

According to the CSO Population and Labour Force Projections 1996-2026, it would appear that while there are no expected changes in the labour force participation rates of married females in the 15-19 age cohort²⁹, it is assumed that there will be continued increases in the overall participation rates of females.

²⁷ Census of Population, Labour Force data and CSO *Statistical Release*, Sept. 1997.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ The absence of change in the 15-19 year old group is likely to relate to the increase in the average age of females marrying for the first time (see Table X above) and increased participation in third level education.

Table 11. Actual versus projected labour force figures, 1991-2006³⁰

	Total Labour Force	Women in Labour Force	% Women in Labour Force
1991 LFS	1,342,300	439,100	32.7
1996 LFS	1,475,200	540,200	36.6
1996 Projection	1,433,800	508,700	35.5
2001 Projection	1,544,700	571,000	37.0
2006 Projection	1,619,100	616,000	38.0

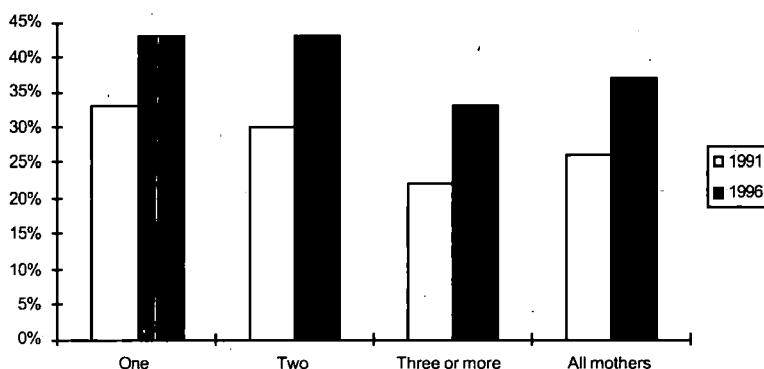
The number of couples (either married or cohabiting) in which both partners work has more than doubled from 108,000 in 1986 to 226,900 in 1996. There has been a sharp decrease in the numbers of couples where only the male is working - 354,700 in 1986 to 276,600 in 1996.

Table 12. Couples classified by work situation, 1986-1996³¹

Work Situation	1986	1991	1996
Both at Work	108,000	148,300	226,900
Only the Man at Work	354,700	319,600	276,600
Only the Woman at Work	21,600	25,800	31,500
Neither at Work	181,900	179,700	174,000

The number of mothers has also increased in the period 1991-1996 similar to the overall increases in female participation rates. In 1991, over 25% of all mothers were working in paid employment, by 1996 the figure had increased to nearly 37%. Participation in the workforce is affected by the number of dependent children mothers have. Mothers with one or two children are more likely to work than those with three or more. In 1991, over a third of mothers with one dependent child worked, whereas a fifth of mothers with three or more dependent children worked. However, rates in both cases have also shown increases in line with increases in other categories of female participation.

Figure 4. Labour force participation rate of mothers by number of dependent children, 1991 and 1996³²



Average earnings by women still remain below average earnings by men in industry. Nevertheless, average earnings by women have increased in the period 1971 and 1996, and the gap between women and men's earnings is narrowing.

³⁰ CSO Statistical Release, Sept. 1997

³¹ Labour Force Survey

³² Ibid

Table 13. Industrial workers in manufacturing industries - earnings by women and men, 1971 -1996.

Average Earnings	Sep 1971	Sep 1981	Sep 1991	Sep 1996
Women's Weekly	£13.12	£79.65	£162.26	£199.72
Men's Weekly	£27.11	£135.18	£269.11	£305.22
Women's as % of men's (Weekly)	48%	59%	60%	65%
Women's Hourly	£0.34	£2.11	£4.40	£5.40
Men's Hourly	£0.61	£3.12	£6.30	£7.25
Women's as % of men's (Hourly)	56%	68%	70%	74%

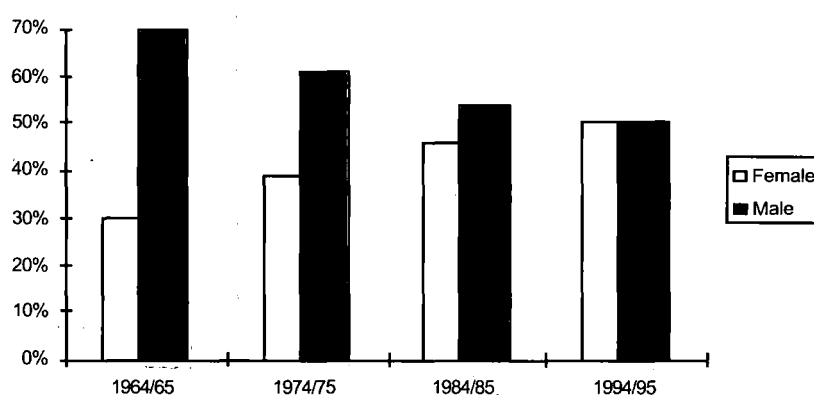
According to Eurostat, women's employment activity rates have been influenced by increases in women's educational attainments in all EU member states. This has implications for ages of females leaving education, entering the workforce and getting married, and the level of educated females entering the workforce into higher paid and "professional" occupations.

Table 14. Number of persons receiving full-time third level education, 1984-1995³³

	1964/65	1974/75	1984/85	1994/95
FEMALE	5,457	12,171	23,835	47,859
MALE	12,740	18,818	28,329	48,822
TOTAL	18,197	30,989	52,164	96,681

Figure 5. Ratio of Females to Males receiving full-time third level education, 1964-1995

It would appear that women with third level education are more likely to participate in the labour force even if they have children. Given fertility patterns and the educational profile and participation rate of women, one can assume that participation rates will continue to increase.



Significant changes have also occurred in the type of work undertaken by women. The decrease in numbers of women in agricultural labour since the sixties has had considerable influence on the overall number of women in the labour force, and specifically in the growth of women in the service sector.

By 1996, the services sector accounted for over 80% of all female employment, as compared with approximately 63% in 1961. Almost 14% of all workers in agriculture in 1951 were women, by 1996, the proportion had fallen to less than 3%.

³³ CSO

Table 15. Sectoral distribution of the number of women at work, 1951- 1996³⁴

Sector	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1996
Agriculture	68,000	42,000	26,000	13,000	12,000	15,000
Industry	62,000	62,000	68,000	69,000	71,000	82,000
Services	186,000	174,000	185,000	248,000	303,000	392,000

SUMMARY

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, measurements of 'need' for childcare services have been identified within the context of the following:

- (1) those who would be considered 'likely' to require childcare services and,
- (2) the socio-economic conditions which are 'likely' to give rise to the need for services.

The previous sections have explored the trends which can be viewed as indicating parents' and children's potential need for childcare services in Ireland. The use of this material will also allow the indicators to be used as predictive indicators in measuring the probability of future states of needs for childcare services.

For the purpose of this study, the figures relating to each individual indicator are limited if used in isolation. They will be of significance only when used in conjunction and linked with other indicators. The results of the childcare surveys on the needs and preferences of parents for services will also enhance the validity of the indicators.

Notes to Summary Table:

Not all children will 'need' childcare services, however, and the total population figures above can only indicate the *potential* or *approximate* numbers of children who could need services.

Based on fertility and mobility trends, and despite an increase in the annual number of births between 1961 and 1981, and increases in the numbers of women in the most fertile age groups, 15-49 years, it would appear that child population figures in Ireland will continue to decline.

Decreasing population figures does not necessarily mean that the need for childcare services will also decrease. With fertility rates down to under 2 children, and female education levels increasing, it would appear that women and particularly women with higher educational credentials, will continue to work and combine motherhood.

There are also increasing numbers of couples (either married or cohabiting) in which both partners work. There will be a potential need for childcare services for these children. As births outside of marriage increase, particularly to mothers under 25 years of age, there is likely to be an increasing need for additional supportive childcare services for the children of lone parents.

Average earnings by women have increased in the period 1971 and 1996, and the gap between women and men's earnings is narrowing. The spending power of parents is increasing and therefore they are more likely to be able to afford non family/non relative childcare services.

The growth in the service sector has attracted greater numbers of women-out of agriculture since the sixties. This has meant that women are less likely in rural areas to be home-based and available to care for their children. As the service sector is expanding, it is likely that women's overall participation rates will continue to increase, giving rise for childcare services for mothers of this group.

³⁴ 1951,1961, 1971, 1981 - Census of Population, 1991, 1996 - Labour Force Survey

Table 16. Summary Table of Indicators

INDICATOR	NUMBERS	COMMENT
Child Population.	Total figure 1996: 533,300. Pre-school: 250,400 After-school: 282,900	↓ Figures are decreasing.
Female population in age group 15-44 years.	Total figure 1996: 815,300	↑ Figures are increasing
Number of average annual births.	1991-96: 14.0 per 1,000 average population	↓ Figures are decreasing.
Total fertility rate.	1996: 1.91	↓ Figures are decreasing.
Average annual rate of Estimated Net Migration per 1,000 of population.	1991-96: +0.2	↑ Figures have increased since the period 1986-91.
Marriages per 1,000 of the population.	1995: 15,623	↓ Figures are decreasing.
Percentage of females married classified by age group.	1986-2006: see Table 7 above.	↓ Actual and projected figures are decreasing except for the over 50 year old age group.
Births within and outside marriage.	1995: within 37,742 outside 10,788	↑ Births outside marriage as % of total births are increasing.
Births within marriage to mothers under 20 years of age.	1995: 130	↓ Figures are decreasing.
Women's labour force participation EU comparisons.	1975-95: See Table 10 above.	↑ Figures for almost all countries are increasing.
Women at work in Ireland.	Total for 1996: 488,000 Single: 216,200 Married: 241,400 Other: 30,500	↑ Figures for all groups of women classified by marital status are increasing.
Actual versus projected labour force figures.	Projected 2006: 616,000	↑ Figures are expected to increase.
Couples classified by work situation.	1996 Both at work: 226,900	↑ Figures are increasing.
Labour force participation rate of mothers by number of dependent children.	1996 % of all mothers with one child: 42.6% two children: 43.2% three or more: 36.6%	↑ Figures are increasing.
Women's earnings in manufacturing industries.	1996 Weekly: £199.72 65% of men's average.	↑ Figures are increasing.
Number of persons receiving full-time third level education.	1994/95: Almost 50% are women.	↑ Female figures have increased.
Sectoral distribution of the number of women at work.	1996 Agriculture: 15,000 Industry: 82,000 Services: 392,000	↓ Figures for agriculture are decreasing. Figures for industry and the services sector are increasing.

CHAPTER 4: SURVEYS

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts. Part I will present the findings of a survey undertaken through primary schools in Limerick city and county of parents views and use of pre-school and after-school services.

Part II will outline findings from:

- two micro surveys of parents regarding their specific needs in terms of a community crèche in their locality. The surveys were conducted in a rural and an urban environment;
- a telephone survey of companies in the Shannon Development region to look at employer funder /workplace based provision;
- other studies conducted during the course of this research which will further explore relevant issues.

Introduction to Part I

The aim of the survey is to explore the use and preferences of parents of pre-school and school-going services in Limerick city and county. In examining 'use' and 'preferences', the findings will show the gap that exists between use and needs, which in turn provides information on the potential take-up of services if additional services were made available.

Childcare Services in Context

Services for both pre- and after-school groups can vary enormously in terms of availability, focus, content and level of staff training. Pre-school services relate to children under compulsory school age (six years of age) or who are not yet attending primary school. Formal services include nurseries, pre-schools, playgroups and crèches provided by private individuals, commercial, voluntary or state agencies, whereas informal care is provided by childminders, neighbours and other social networks.

The percentage of children in the 0-3 year age group who attend publicly funded pre-school in Ireland is very small (less than 5%). Most are cared for by childminders. In contrast, the percentage of children in the 3-6 year old group who avail of state funded services increases significantly (over 50%)³⁵. This noticeable increase however, relates more to the numbers of children who enter the education system at four and five years rather than the availability of publicly funded pre-school services.

After-school services are less well-defined and their development in Ireland has not been systematic. After-school services covers a variety of group care and recreation facilities, such as clubs, after-school groups, homework clubs and holiday schemes. After-school services offer non-family supervised facilities for children outside normal school hours, including school holidays, when parents are not available.

The growing emergence of after-school services has been linked to the increasing participation of women in the workforce. In addition, they are seen to be an extension of school in providing extra support and supervision for children.

The organisation of after-school services is more complex than pre-school services as after-school services are made available to compensate for parents' working hours. Unlike pre-school services, after-school services must be responsive to the complexities of the timetable of working parents, the daily school schedule and the changing school calendar of the children.

There is currently an absence of policy or funding by the Government in Ireland for after-school services. Provision is haphazard and is made available by voluntary agencies, on the initiative of some individual schools or as an extension of services offered by some private crèches. The majority of after-school care in Ireland, however, is provided by relatives or individual childminders and neighbours. Furthermore, childcare staff in most after-school services are less likely to have received any specific training than staff in pre-school services. This is reflected by the absence of any specialised after-school childcare training courses in Ireland.

³⁵ See figure 13.2, Chapter 13: *Early Childhood Services in Europe: Qualities and Quality*. Children, Research and Policy, edited by Bernstein, B. & Brannen, J. Taylor & Francis, UK 1996.

In the absence of formal state registration for all childcare services, accurate data on the level of provision of all services in Ireland remains indiscernible. It is envisaged that this survey will contribute to findings of other studies in this field. Furthermore, it has not been clear to what extent relatives and friends or other informal care services are used as a matter of choice by parents rather than as a matter of necessity. Findings of this research indicate that many parents would use more formal provision and publicly funded facilities if they existed.

Objective of the School Survey

The objective of the school survey is to ascertain the current level of use and need by parents of pre-school and after-school care services. 'Use' of services is influenced by the availability of particular services in the area together with parents perceived need for a service.

It is envisaged that the gaps between use and need will highlight the potential for additional services and in turn, the potential for additional employment for childcare workers.

The survey had four main aims:

- to outline the range of childcare services used in Limerick city and county;
- to investigate the current extent of use of childcare services in Limerick city and county;
- to establish parental preferences and needs for childcare services;
- to examine the level of information sources available regarding childcare services.

Scope of the Survey

The survey focuses on children of pre-school age and children attending school who were still young enough to require some after-school care.

Children in Junior Infant classes of national schools were chosen as they provided a direct contact with parents who recently had children who may have used or been in need of pre-school services (e.g. in the preceding twelve month period). 4th class children were chosen as they would still be in need of after-school services and their parents would have had knowledge of their after-school needs.

It would not have been possible to have contacted the same number of parents with children of pre-school age without a current official database of pre-school services and of parents who care for their own pre-school children themselves.

Schools in Limerick were selected for the following reasons:

- limited resources restricted the survey to one county area. It was felt that limitations in the sample could be compensated for by a more valid exploration of the research area.
- Limerick has a good representation of an urban and rural population and of areas of advantage and disadvantage.

Methodology

A survey of parents' experience and views was considered the most appropriate technique to use given the specific aims of this research. Furthermore a standardised structured questionnaire was designed as it could best approximate use and need for childcare.

The survey was conducted using questionnaires distributed to parents of children in Junior Infant and 4th classes. The schools were randomly selected from the total number of primary schools in Limerick city and county listed by the Department of Education.

Schools were selected on the basis of the number of pupils required to provide a representative sample of the total Junior Infant class pupil population in the region. The sample was stratified by urban and rural location. The sample of schools for each strata was then chosen by means of random selection with the use of a table of random numbers.³⁶ Given the time and resource limitations, the same schools were selected for the 4th class survey.

Of the twenty-six schools chosen, twenty schools (77%) agreed to participate in the survey.

³⁶ Table 5.1 Table of random numbers p55: Surveys in Social Research: D.A. de Vaus (George Allen & Unwin) London 1986.

School Profiles

Table 1 in Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of the schools by urban/ rural divide. There is almost an equal number of pupils for each in the Junior Infant classes and a 2:3 urban/rural ratio for the 4th class pupils.

Pupils in schools in rural areas in Limerick are likely to be from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. In Limerick city, differences would appear to be more evident. It may be assumed that children attending schools located in local authority housing areas are from disadvantaged areas. In the random selection of urban schools, there was an equal number of schools selected from local authority areas as from other areas. Therefore, the final sample was structured to provide a cross section of children from both socio-economic backgrounds.

The Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken of a sample of parents in Limerick city. The sample was compiled using three groups of parents. The first group were parents who were in full-time employment. The second group were drawn from a group of parents on a FAS Community Employment Scheme and the third were from a group of parents who were unemployed.

The pilot sample consisted of forty parents, from a mix of advantaged and disadvantaged areas who had children in Junior Infant classes and in 3rd, 4th or 5th classes. The questionnaires were also circulated to childcare personnel in the event that there were areas of relevance which were not included.

The main aim of the pilot study was to pre-test the draft questionnaire and to ensure that the questionnaires were easy to understand, to sort out issues relating to wording and to assess the length of time involved. It was necessary to make some amendments to the format of the questions and to include some additional questions.

The Questionnaire

Questionnaires were divided into two sections. One section was for those respondents who were not using any childcare services, and the other for those who were.

The questionnaire for the Junior Infant class contained twenty-nine items for those respondents who used some form of childcare and seventeen items for those who did not. Respondents were asked to answer questions, relating to the sixth month period before their child started in the Junior Infants class, thus providing recent information regarding pre-school services.

The questionnaire for the 4th class contained twenty-six items for those respondents who used some form of after-school care and sixteen items for those who did not.

Questions were grouped to explore a number of key topics which included childcare arrangements, satisfaction levels, preference for alternative services, information services and finally, personal details of the respondents e.g. marital status, living arrangements, employment status and income of parents etc. Additional comments were also invited at the end of the questionnaires³⁷.

Data Collection and Response Rates

The total number of questionnaires returned for the Junior Infant class was 213, resulting in a response rate of 53%. Those returned for the 4th class was 201, resulting in a response rate of 65%. The response rates for both were considered quite positive given the complex chain involved in the distribution and collection (i.e. researcher-principal-teacher-child-parent-child-teacher- principal-researcher).³⁸

Excluding spoiled questionnaires, the final figure amounted to 208 for the Junior Infants and 187 for the 4th class. The final response rates were 51% and 60% respectively. This resulted in a combined rate for final analysis of 55%.

³⁷ See appendix 2 for samples of the questionnaires and accompanying letters.

³⁸ See Table 2 in Appendix 1 for a breakdown of the number of questionnaires distributed and returned.

In terms of measuring respondents by class background, questions relating to income and housing were included in the questionnaires. The response rate to these questions, particularly income, was very low. This resulted in a serious complication to the findings in terms of assessing responses by respondents in terms of socio-economic backgrounds.

Data Analysis

As all responses were of a quantitative nature, these were analysed by computer using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists). The open ended comments were individually analysed.

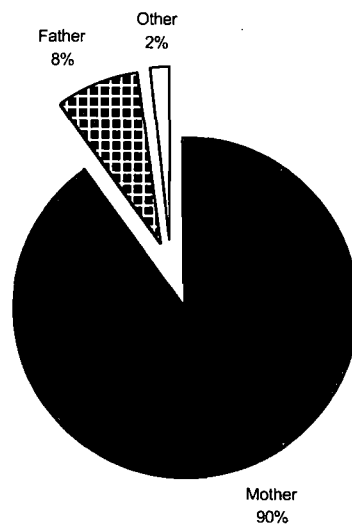
Results

In the following section the primary findings of the survey are outlined.

The Respondents

It was noted that the majority of respondents were women. This pattern is not unusual however, as other research also indicates that it is mothers who organise and negotiate regarding their children's pre-school and after-school care, and their wider education³⁹. Almost 90% of respondents were mothers and 74% were women living with their spouses. 11% were mothers living alone. Only 7% of the respondents were fathers living with their spouses.

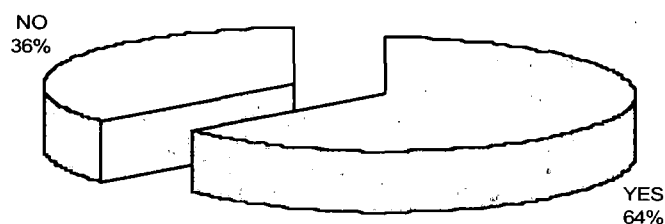
Figure 1. Relationship of respondents to the child



The Number of Children Who Used Childcare Services

The following figures illustrate the extent to which childcare was used and required on a regular basis by parents for their children in the 6th month period before they started in Junior Infants and the lower level of use by the 4th class group, with only 22% using any services on a regular basis. The extensive use of pre-school services by the majority of respondents compares to other recent studies.⁴⁰

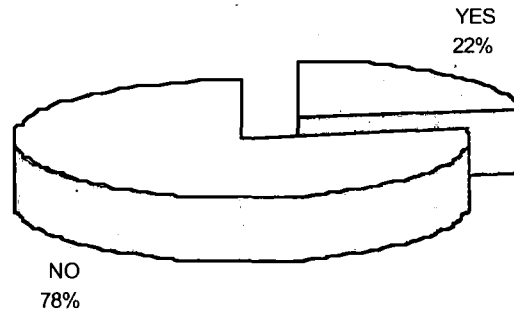
Figure 2a. Respondents whose children used pre-school services.



³⁹ David, J. Parents, Gender and Educational. Educational Policy. Meltzer, H.: Day Care Services for Children, HMSO, London. 1994

⁴⁰ Hennessy, E. & Hayes, N.: *Early Childhood Experience Study – Report to Schools*, UCD, Dublin 1995

Figure 2b. Respondents whose children use after-school services.



The Main Type Of Service Used

Respondents were asked to state which type of care was most frequently used for their children on a regular basis. Other services may have been used by the same child and so the following data may be an under-estimation of the actual situation. For example, it is possible that a child may have attended a playgroup four days a week and a private crèche on one day. The following table would therefore exclude the respondent who used the private crèche as an additional or secondary form of childcare.

Table 1. The main type of pre-school services used.

Type of Service	%
Playgroup	39%
Child's relative other than parent/ guardian	18%
Childminder in childminder's home	16.5%
Neighbour	6%
Private crèche	4.5%
Childminder in child's home	4.5%
Other	4.5%
Community/social service crèche	3%
Workplace crèche/nursery	2%
Mother & child group	2%

The previous table gives details of the range of primary pre-school services used by parents /guardians. The most frequently used service is the playgroup with over 38% of children using this service. Where the two categories of childminder are combined (i.e. 'childminder in childminder's home' and 'childminder in child's home') together with 'neighbour', then this type of care is also of considerable importance. 27% of children have availed of these three combined categories. "Other" mainly comprised Montessori pre-schools.

The overall breakdown in use of services supports recent findings in the Early Childhood Experience Study by Hennessy and Hayes⁴¹. Although the percentage for those who used playgroups above (38%) is considerably lower than that found in the Hennessy/Hayes study (64%), the current study only inquired into the primary care facility and it is therefore likely that more children would have experience with playgroups than is stated above.

⁴¹ Ibid

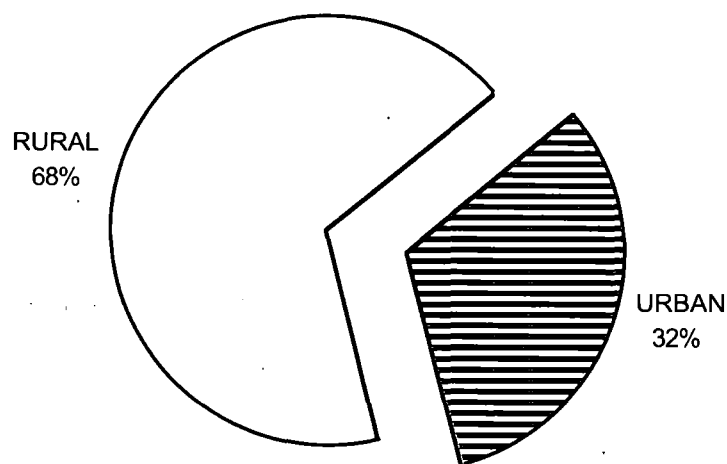
The use of group-based care approximates at around 10% from this survey whereas the Hennessy/Hayes suggested a 6% usage. This was also compared with the Fine-Davis report⁴² which reported that 2.5% of pre-school children with working mothers were cared for in a group-based facility. This current survey suggests an increase of 5% in the number of working mothers using group based care.

The following table highlights the differences and similarities between the type of pre-school services used in urban and rural areas. One of the more noticeable differences is the absence of community services in rural areas and the more extensive use of childminder services.

Table 2. The main type of pre-school services used (rural/urban).

Type of Service	RURAL	URBAN
Playgroup	38%	39%
Childminder in childminder's home	23%	10%
Child's relative other than parent/guardian	17%	19%
Private crèche	6%	3%
Childminder in child's home	6%	3%
Neighbour	5%	7%
Other	3%	6%
Workplace crèche/nursery	2%	3%
Community/social service crèche	0%	6%
Mother & child group	0%	4%

Figure 3. The extent of the use of childminders in rural/urban areas.



42 Fine-Davis, M.: *Working Party on Childcare Facilities for Working Parents - Report to the Minister for Labour*. Stationery Office, Dublin 1983.

Table 3. The main type of after-school service used

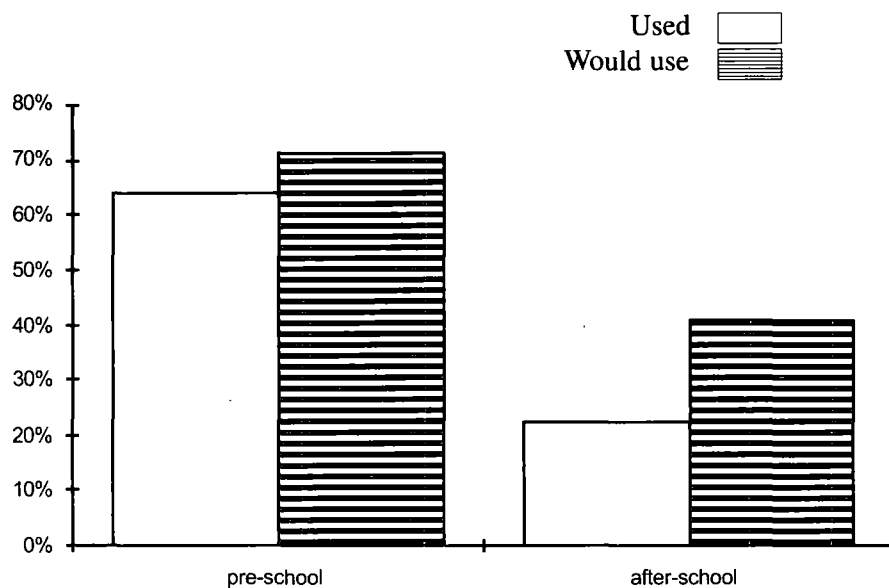
Type of Service	%
Child's relative other than parent/ guardian	39%
Childminder in childminder's home	21%
Childminder in child's home	15%
Neighbour	13%
After-school group in community hall/social services/ health board crèche	5%
Other	5%
After-school group in child's school	2%
Workplace crèche/nursery	0%
Private crèche	0%

Table 3 outlines the range of after-school care used by respondents at the time of completion of the questionnaires. Although after-school care appears to be predominantly undertaken by relatives, when the categories of 'childminder' and 'neighbour' are combined they amount to over half the care provided. Only 7% avail of specific after-school services i.e. 'after-school group in community hall/ social services / health board crèche' and 'after-school group in child's school'.

The Number Of Parents Who Would Use Services

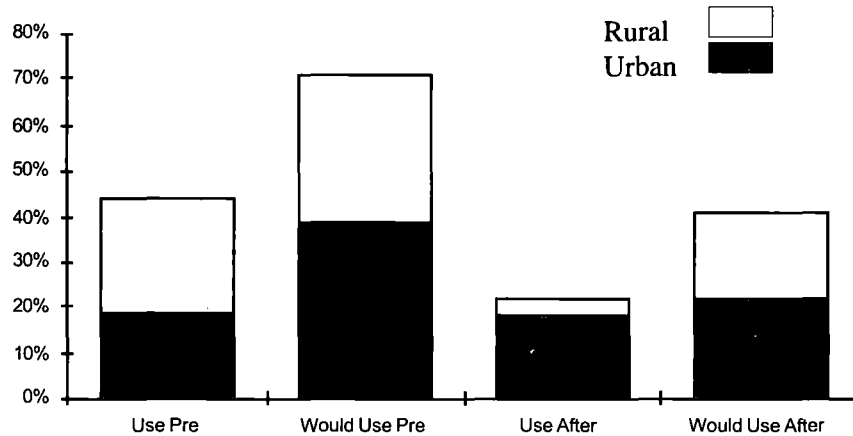
Figure 4. highlights the increase for both categories in the number of parents who have used or are using services and who would use services if services were available and affordable. This could be used as a measure to indicate the gap between availability and need for affordable and accessible services.

Figure 4. Parents who used and would use services if affordable and convenient services were available.



71% of parents compared with 64% of parents who used pre-school services and 41% compared with 22% of parents who use after-school services, stated that they would use services if accessible and affordable services were available. This results in an overall figure of 62% of respondents who suggest that they would use services compared with 47% of respondents who used services. The implication of such a finding is that an improvement in affordability and accessibility of the current services would lead to an overall increase in potential usage.

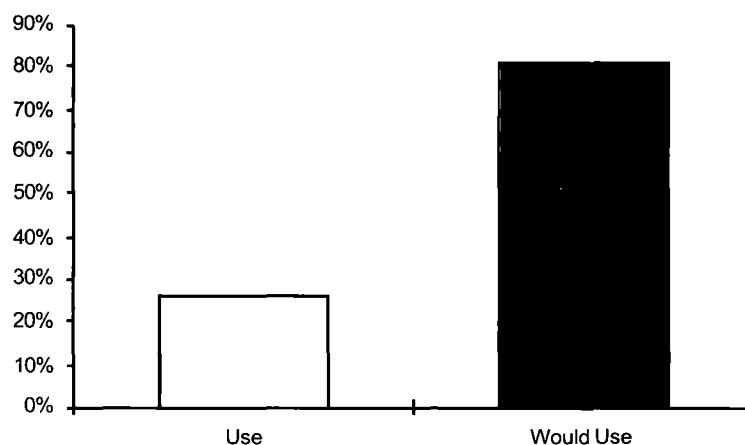
Figure 4a. Parents who used and would use services if affordable and convenient services were available (Urban/Rural).



Use Pre: Parents who use pre-school services
Would Use Pre: Parents who would use pre-school services
Use After: Parents who use after-school services
Would Use After: Parents who would use after-school services

Figure 4a illustrates the differences between urban and rural respondents who use and would use services. The most striking difference appears in the after school group in rural areas. 4% of respondents stated that they use after-school services compared with 19% who stated that they would use services. The other major difference emerged with respondents of pre-school children living in urban areas - 29% stated that they used services compared with 39% who would use pre-school services.

Figure 4b. Parents (living alone) who used and would use services if affordable and convenient services were available.



Data relating to respondents who used and would use services were also analysed in relation to parents who could be categorised as 'living alone' (figure 4b). Although there are many perspectives in which this particular data could be analysed, on the basis of discussions with parents and childcare personnel, it was

felt that respondents categorised as living alone have particular demands in terms of their childcare. Frequently, they do not have a significant other adult in the immediate home environment to offer support with the care of their children. Many studies have highlighted the absence of adequate childcare as a barrier to women's employment and that the obstacle to participation by lone parents is particularly related to this dearth of services⁴³.

Responses by those living in local authority housing and owner occupied housing were also compared. However, data showed small variance between both groups. 70% of those in local authority housing and 67% in family owned housing stated that they would use services if affordable and accessible childcare services were available.

Of those parents who stated that they would not use services if affordable and convenient services were available, 17% stated that their child was too young and 47% stated that their child had special needs. Respondents did not elaborate on what those 'special needs' were.

Preferred Type of Service

The following table indicates the preferred type of services by respondents for both Junior Infants and for 4th Class. Although most respondents of the younger age group preferred the child's parent to care for their child, a noticeable proportion for both categories indicated their preference for a community/health board service. For the younger child, a childminder in the child's home is also a significantly important choice.

The main preferences by both groups of parents are likely to be influenced by the location of the service. (Table 5 later on in this section highlights the importance of 'location' as being an important reason for considering a particular service.) For the younger age group, care in the home would create the least disturbance for the child and for the parent. Home care eliminates the inconvenience of having to transport a child from one location to another. Long journeys are generally considered to be a source of great dissatisfaction. Furthermore, care in the child's home is possibly the easiest for the young child to accept in the absence of the parent.

For the after-school group, services in the child's school is the preferred option, again this may either reflect parents concerns regarding transportation arrangements of the child, or parents desire to have their child in a continuous care situation and in the same environment with their school friends. A further assumption relates to parents regard for the school organisation and their belief in the safety and quality of a state supervised service.

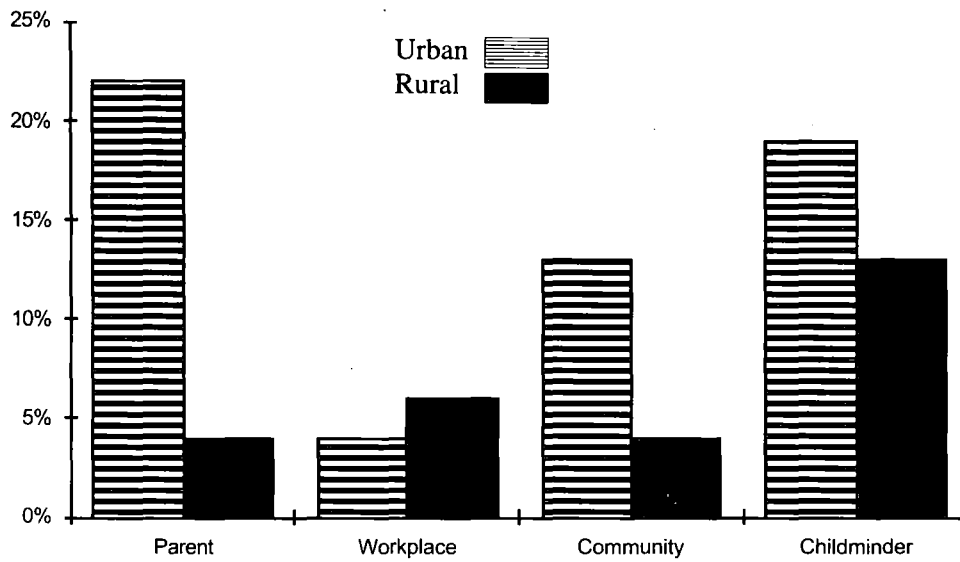
Table 4. The main type of services preferred

	Pre-school	4th Class
Child's parent	28%	25%
Childminder in child's home	18%	8%
Service in community hall/social services/ health board crèche	17%	22%
Workplace crèche/nursery	11%	3%
Private crèche	9%	0%
Childminder in childminder's home	9%	3%
Playgroup	8%	not applicable
Parent & child group	0%	6%
After-school group in child's school	not applicable	33%

⁴³ McCashin, A.: Employment Aspects of Young Lone Parenthood in Ireland. Trinity College Dublin, 1997.

Figure 5 indicates the main type of services preferred by respondents within the urban/rural dimension.

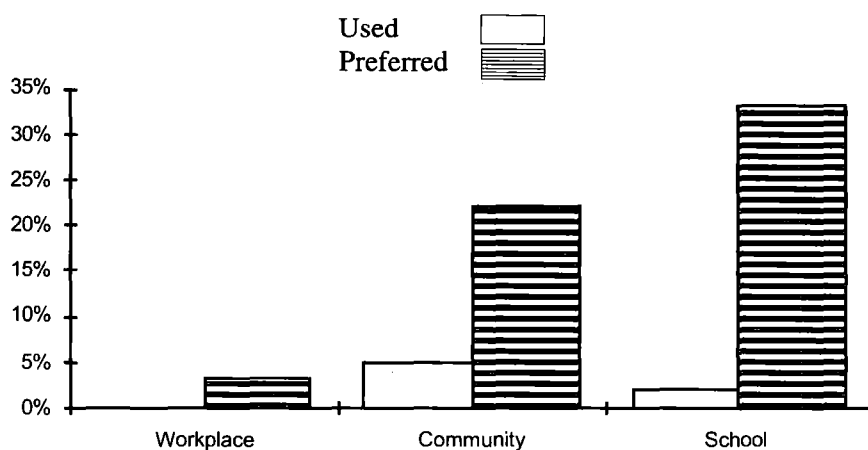
Figure 5. Main services preferred (urban/rural)



Parent: Child's parent
Workplace: Workplace crèche /nursery
Community: In community hall/ social services / health board crèche
Childminder: Service in child's home or in childminder's home

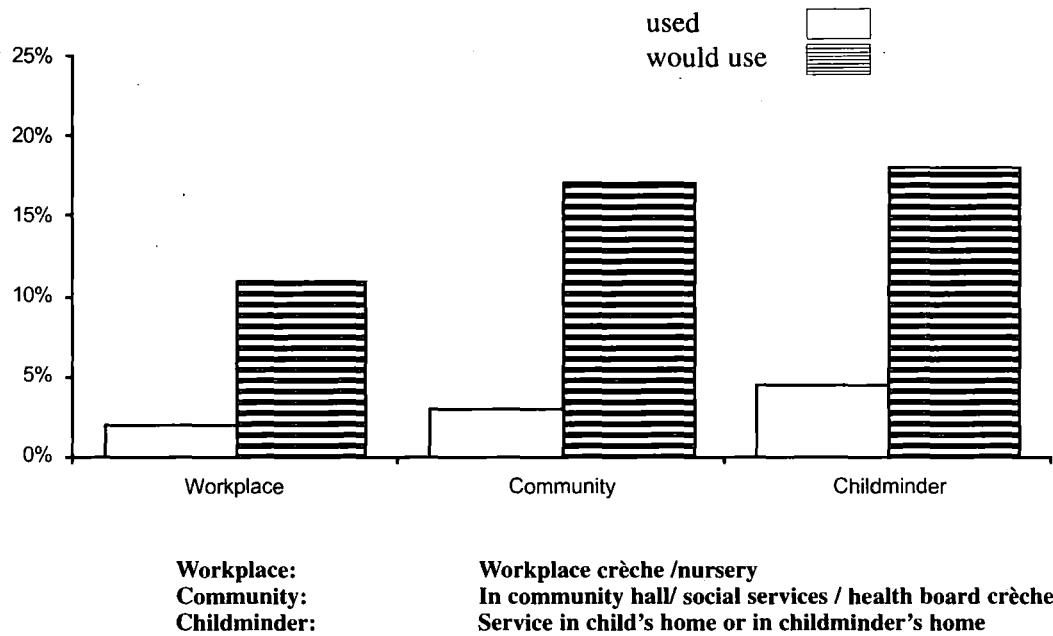
The following figures highlights the differences in parents' preferences versus their actual use of particular services for both pre- and after-school care. These examples may also be used as indicators of potential childcare demands.

Figure 5a. Used versus preferred after-school services.



Workplace: Workplace crèche/nursery
Community: In community hall/ social services / health board crèche
School: Service in child's school

Figure 5b. Used versus preferred pre-school services.

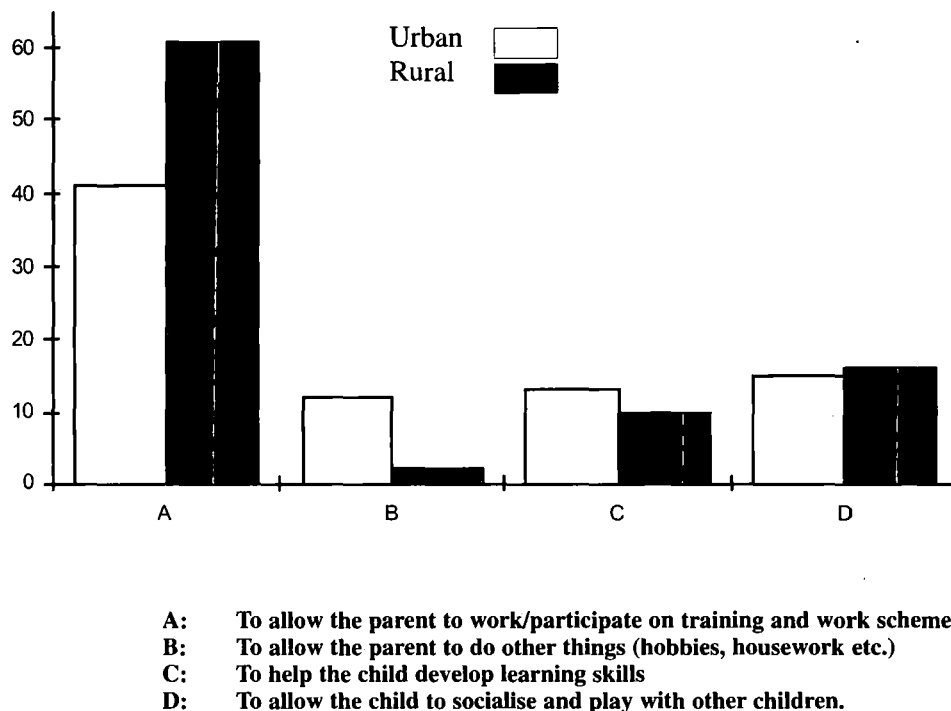


The Reasons Childcare is Required

Over half of the respondents (54%) required childcare to facilitate their employment or their continuing education and training. Other reasons given were more child-centred. A determining concern was to assist the child in the development learning skills (12%), and with social skills (25%).

The following figure outlines the results within the rural/urban context.

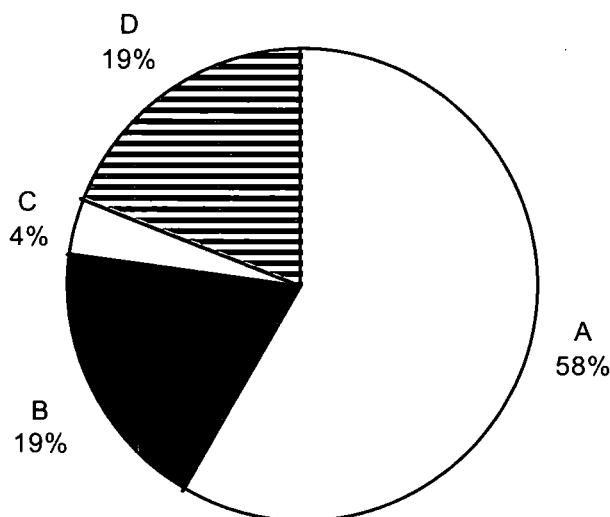
Figure 6. Reason childcare is required (urban/rural)



An urban/rural breakdown indicates that respondents living in rural areas are more likely to link childcare needs to parental occupational, educational or training demands.

Figure 6a below provides a breakdown of responses received from those surveyed who were 'living alone', i.e., without a partner. Reasons specified centre on facilitating parental work or meeting the broader demands of the household.

Figure 6a. Main reason childcare is required by respondents who are living alone, i.e., without a partner.



- A:** To allow the parent to work/participate on training and work schemes
- B:** To allow the parent to do other things (hobbies, housework etc.)
- C:** To help the child develop learning skills
- D:** To allow the child to socialise and play with other children.

The Main Criteria for Choosing a Particular Service

The respondents were asked to state the three main reasons underlying their choice of a particular service. The following table outlines the most common responses to this question.

Table 5. Main reasons for choosing a particular childcare service.

REASON	% of Respondents		
	1st Reason	2nd Reason	3rd Reason
Location	35%	7%	8%
Child got on well with the carer	19%	23%	9%
Respondent knew the carer well	12%	16%	13%
Good quality service/activities/ facilities	8%	16%	27%
Well qualified & experienced staff	8%	3%	7%
Other	8%	12%	29%
Child's sibling went to same service	7%	11%	3%
Free, reasonable or subsidised service	3%	12%	4%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

The principal reason for choosing a particular childcare service was its location. This far outweighs other reasons such as the staff, the quality of activities and facilities or the respondent previously knowing the carer. Only 3% of respondents gave a first priority to "Free, reasonable or subsidised service" which may indicate parents lack of interest in costs or the absence of such services as experienced by the respondents in their areas.

The second most important reason for respondents was that the child related well with the carer, and the third important reason was the good quality service/activities/ facilities provided by the childcare service.

Figure 7. The three main reasons for choosing a particular service in order of preference.

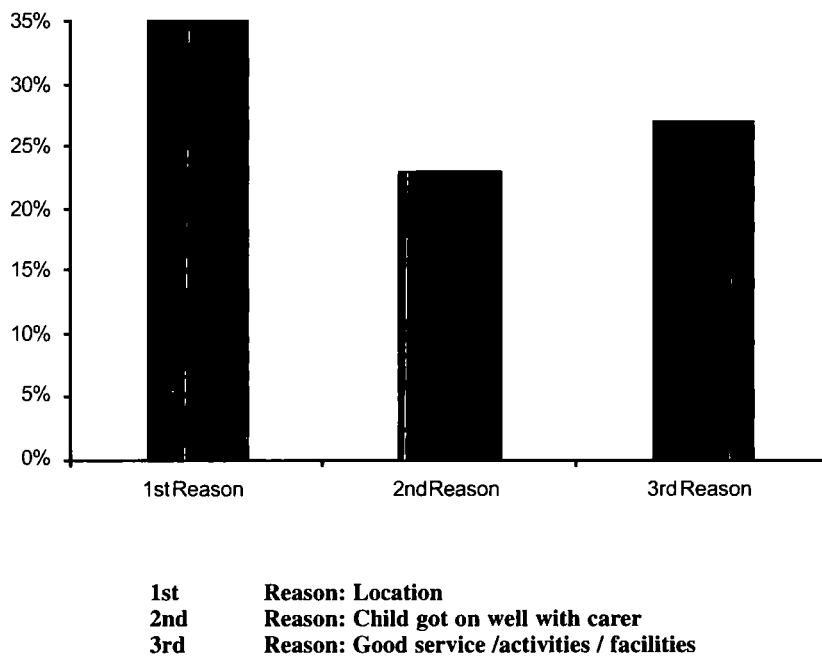
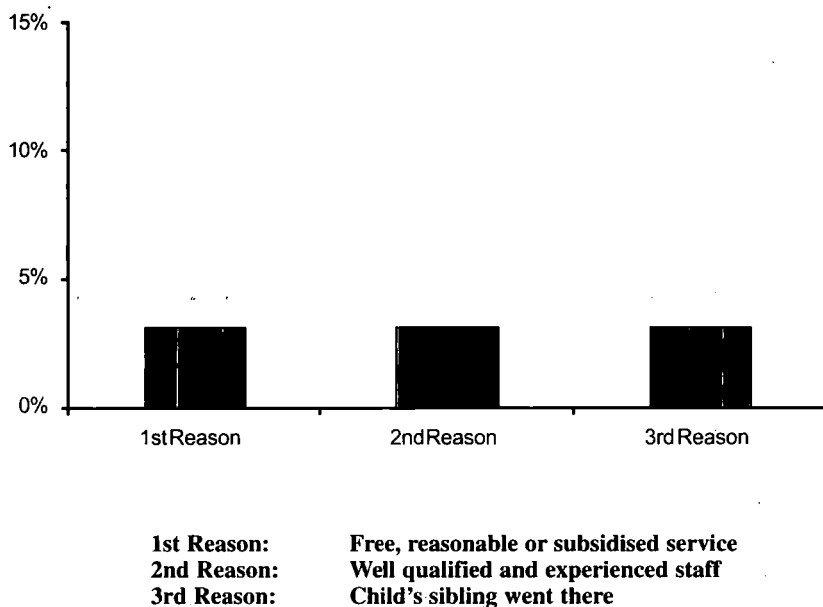


Figure 7a. The three reasons of least importance for choosing a particular service in order of preference.



Main Activities of the Childcare Services

Respondents were asked to state the main activities that took place in the service used by their children. The two most frequently noted activities were 'playing indoors/outdoors', educational/school homework.

Table 6. The main daily activities of children at the childcare services.

Activity	Ranked in order of frequency
Playing indoors/ outdoors	1
Educational /School homework	2
Watching TV	3
Music, dancing, singing	4
Messy play	5
Creative art	6
Problem solving activities	7
Helping with domestic activities	8
Outings	9
Sport	10

If the above table is analysed on the basis of the reasons why parents decide to use a childcare service (e.g. to allow the parent to work, etc.) the findings indicate that for those parents who use services

- A. In order for parents to work, the main activities for the majority of their children were:
1. Helping with domestic activities
 2. Playing indoors/outdoors
 3. Watching TV
- B. In order to help the child develop social skills and to socialise and play with other children, the main activities were:
1. Music, singing and dancing
 2. Creative art
 3. School homework/ Educational activities.

For those in group A above, an assumption can be made that few affordable day care services exist to cater for working parents that also include a child centred programme of activities. This may also reflect the number of children in full-day care provided by relatives or childminders who are not in a position or trained to offer child-centred programmes.

In contrast, while group B indicates that there is an availability of services with child-centred activities, many parents interviewed stated that they did not require such services on a full day basis.

Table 6 was further broken down by two age groups. The older age group (4th class) for the most part complete homework in the after-school service. Their second and third main activities were 'playing outdoors' and 'watching TV'. Again these last two activities reflect the absence of afterschool care with a structured childcare programme. When the preferred activities detailed by parents are examined for the 4th class group, differences emerge:

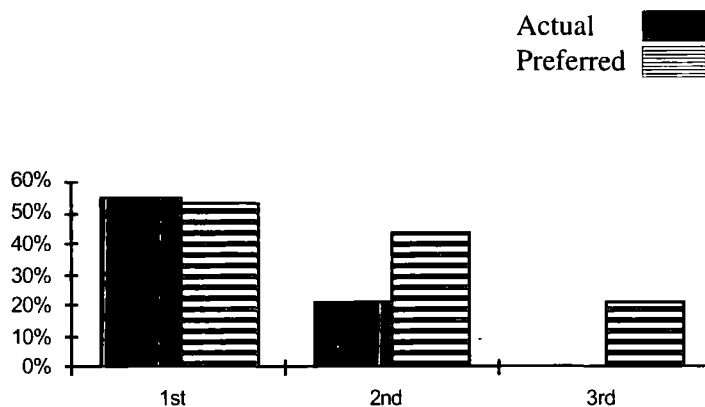
Table 7. Actual and Preferred activities for the 4th Class group.

Main Activity for 4th class	Ranked in Order of Frequency & Preference					
	1st Activity		2nd Activity		3rd Activity	
	Actual	Preferred	Actual	Preferred	Actual	Preferred
Educational/ School homework	1	1	3	1	n/r	3
Helping with domestic activities	2	3	n/r	6	n/r	n/r
Playing outdoors/ indoors	3	4	1	3	1	2
Music, dancing, singing/Art	4	2	5	2	n/r	4
Outings	6	n/r	4	4	n/r	n/r
Watching TV	5	6	2	n/r	2	n/r
Sport	n/r	5	6	5	3	1

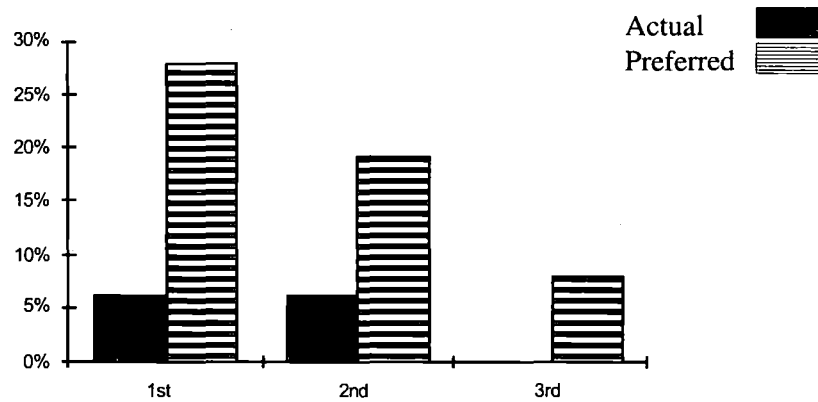
n/r : no response

The major differences between actual activities and preferred activities were the priority given to developmental activities and the absence of TV viewing.

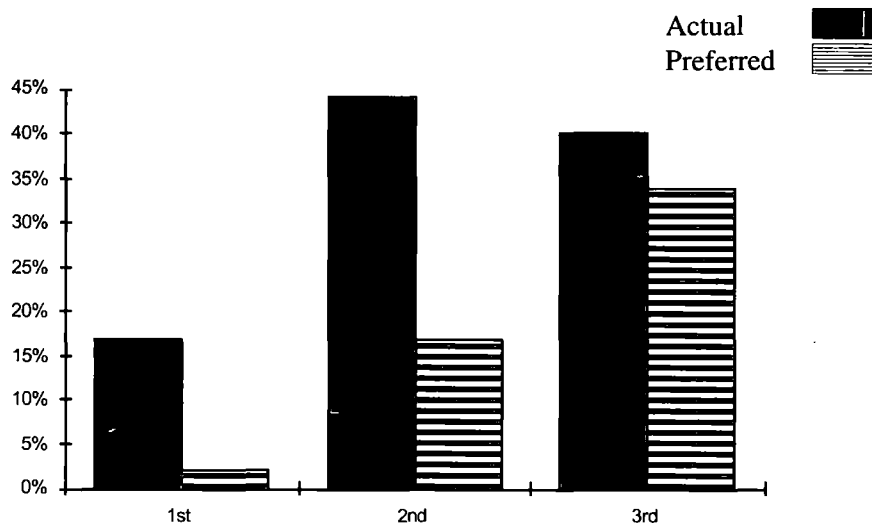
**Figure 8. Actual versus Preferred main activities
(Educational/Homework as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd main activity)**



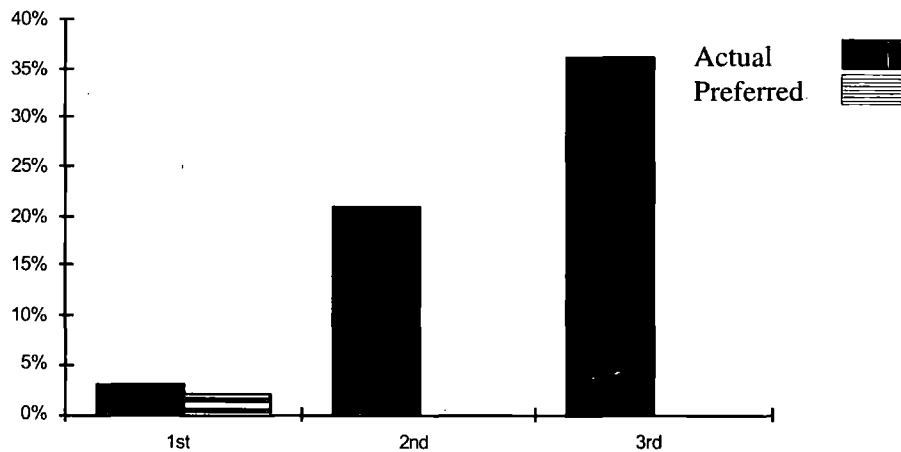
**Figure 8a. Actual versus Preferred main activities
(Music, Singing, Dancing/Creative Art as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd main activity)**



**Figure 8b. Actual versus Preferred main activities
(Playing indoors/outdoors as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd main activity)**



**Figure 8c. Actual versus Preferred main activities
(Watching TV as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd main activity)**



The differences between the 'actual' and 'preferred' activities for the Junior Infant group were minor in comparison with the older age group. This may indicate the wider availability of pre-school services with a more varied range of activities.

Number of Days Services are Required

The following table gives an indication of the number of days the childcare services would be required based on parents reasons for needing services. The majority of parents who require a service to facilitate their employment demands require a five day service with an equal number of parents who would use the service for the child's development and socialising between three and five days.

Table 8. The number of days the service is required based on parents' needs.

Number of Days	A	B
1	1%	4%
2	14%	11%
3	24%	43%
4	7%	5%
5	54%	37%

A: Allows parents to work

B: Helps the child to develop / to play and socialise with others

Of those parents who are single, widowed, separated and divorced, almost half would use the service on a 5 day basis with 14% requiring a 3 day service. Of those who are married and living with their partners, 43% and 31% would require the service on 5 and 3 days respectively.

Insurance and Qualifications in Childcare Services

34% of respondents replied that the childcare service they used had some form of insurance. 22% of these respondents used playgroups. Only one respondent had stated that their childminder had specific insurance to cover her childcare situation.

40% of respondents replied that the childcare service used did not have any insurance, 14% of these care providers were childminders and neighbours. The remainder were relatives and only one respondent had a child in a playgroup without insurance. 26% of those who responded did not know whether their childcare service had any insurance. 11% of these had children in playgroups and 6% with childminders and neighbours.

41% of respondents stated that workers in the service they used had some childcare qualifications or training. Of these, 24% were playgroups. Only 3% of those responding stated that the childminders they availed of had any qualifications. 37% of respondents stated that the childcare services which their children attended did not have qualified workers. The majority, 31%, of these were childminders and neighbours, 19% were relatives.

9% of respondents did not know, if the staff of childcare services that their children were using, had any qualifications. These were mainly respondents using playgroups.

Satisfaction with Service

In general, respondents were very satisfied with the services they used. Only 4% expressed dissatisfaction. The main reason for dissatisfaction was that the service was too expensive. A second reason was that the location was unsuitable.

Reasons for not using childcare

41% of respondents who were not using any childcare services stated that they felt their child had special needs which could not be catered for at a childcare service. 8% said that their children had had a "previous bad experience". Only 4% of respondents whose children did not attend any childcare service stated that they preferred to look after their child themselves.

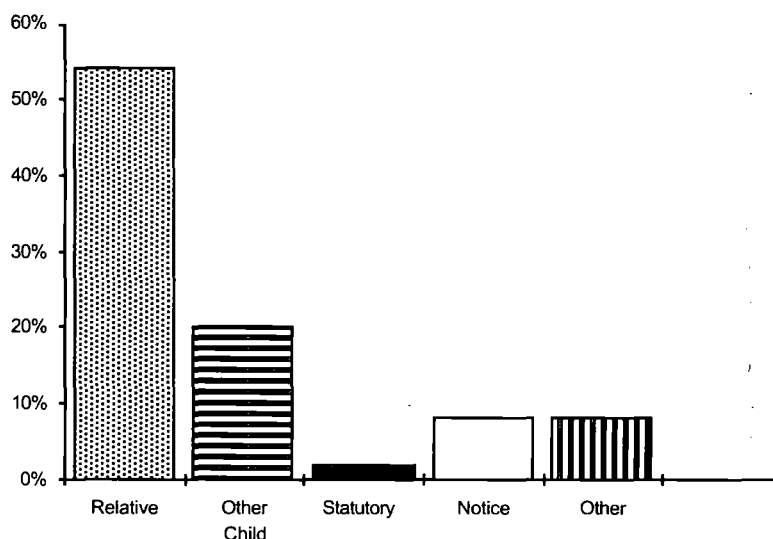
47% of respondents of Junior Infant classes who did not use any services indicated that their children were too young to attend any pre-school services. See Appendix 4, for other individual comments given by respondents for not using any childcare services.

Information Services

Questions regarding information services were included to identify the extent to which information on childcare services is available. It would appear that generally parents find out about services through informal channels such as friends and relatives. This indicates either a lack of information about services or that the formal information services are ineffective in disseminating information to parents, or that much of childcare exists on the "black market" where informal sources of information predominate.

38% of respondents said that they had difficulties in finding out about childcare services. Although half the respondents stated that they did not have any difficulties, the principal method of finding a care service was on the recommendation of relatives, neighbours and friends⁴⁴. This meant that the information available to them was information available to their friends and relatives, who may not be aware of new services or other child-related information which should come from the health board. Only 2% of respondents stated that they heard of the childcare they used from a professional or from a notice in a health board clinic.

Figure 9. How respondents found out about the childcare they used.



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- “Relative”: Relative other than mother or father (54%)
- “Other Child”: Other child (in same family) went there (20%)
- “Statutory”: Public health nurse, social worker, health board service, etc. (2%)
- “Notice”: Notice/advert in newspaper, Golden Pages, shop, club, etc. (8%)
- “Other”: Other sources than listed above (8%)

Findings relating to questions on the availability of information services indicate that there is a gap in the formal sector for the supply of information to parents. With the establishment of data bases of childcare providers who are obliged to notify health boards of their services under the Child Care Act 1991, and as such information is made available to parents, there will be increased opportunities for childcare services to use other methods of informing parents of their services. There is the potential that increased awareness of services may lead to increased usage.

Summary

The purpose of the survey was firstly to provide estimates of the usage of childcare services in the Mid-West, the range of childcare services available to children in the region, the needs of parents regarding childcare services, and the level of information services available regarding the availability of childcare services. Furthermore, it was hoped to document the range of childcare services available, the specific needs of parents regarding childcare and the level and types of information available concerning childcare.

⁴⁴ This would appear to be a common finding in Meltzer's study (1994).

The sample was drawn from a number of schools in Limerick city and county. It was considered that parents views in this area would be representative of other areas in the country given the socio-economic formation of Limerick. The sample comprised respondents from rural and urban environments and from areas of advantage and disadvantage.

The survey was undertaken through the use of questionnaires distributed to parents via national schools. In view of a fairly complex chain in the distribution of questionnaires which was further complicated by the school holidays, the return of completed questionnaires resulted in a significantly high response rate.

The overwhelming majority of respondents were mothers and excluding the respondents who were mothers living alone, this finding reflects other research with mothers identified as the key actors in the management and organisation of their children's childcare and education.

Current use of services by parents amounted to 64% of pre-school services and 22% of after-school services. The main type of pre-school services utilised were playgroups (38%) followed by childminders/ neighbours (27%). The after-school age group used childminders/ neighbours (49%) and relatives (38%).

If more affordable and more convenient childcare places were available, parents who expressed an interest in using such services indicated that they would be more likely to do so. This was the situation regarding parents of both age groups of children. 62% of respondents from both children's groups expressed that they would use services compared with 47% of respondents who have actually used them. This shows a difference of 15% in the actual and the suggested potential use of childcare services.

The majority of parents stated that they would prefer a greater input by community services or the health board in terms of childcare services. These figures indicate a gap between the availability and current provision of services. A range of service types is also not available.

Furthermore, there is a clear indication that the location of services is the most important factor in determining parents preferences for services and would be far more significant than the qualification and experience of the service provider or the quality of the service or facilities.

Parents also indicated that they would prefer more interactive and organised activities at the childcare services.

The majority of parents would require a 5 day service to facilitate their work pattern. For those parents who used childcare services as a means of enhancing their child's development and socialisation, a three to five day service would be needed.

Regarding insurance and the qualifications of service providers, only 34% of respondents stated that services which their children attended had insurance and 41% of respondents stated that service providers had some childcare qualifications.

Generally, parents became aware of services from friends and relatives (54%). Information from health board or other statutory sources was noticeably low. Only 2% of parents stated that they found out about services from public health nurses, social workers, or other health board personnel etc.

Conclusion

The findings of the survey demonstrate that almost two thirds of parents with pre-school children have used some form of pre-school services and that over a fifth of parents with children in 4th classes use after-school care. Excluding playgroups, the care of children would appear to lie extensively with the informal care sectors e.g. neighbours, relatives and childminders. The extent of formal or organised care services for the after-school age group is noticeably low.

Where parents are using childcare to facilitate work or education, the priority is on the location of a childcare service with less emphasis on the actual activities or developmental possibilities on offer. Parents who use

the childcare service in order to help the child develop social skills etc., more frequently use the more affordable and short-term pre-school service e.g. playgroup, which explains the emphasis on developmental activities.

The results of the survey regarding use of services, raised two important issues. One relates to the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Pre-school Regulations, 1996 in that large numbers of informal services utilised by parents will not be inspected by the Health Board and thus, a considerable number of children are in services which may or may not reach acceptable standards of care as defined in legislation. The second point is that the findings may be interpreted as highlighting the scarcity of formal childcare services providing an organised programme of activities, particularly for the older age group.

Both these issues are of relevance to the current research in that forthcoming inspections by health boards should have the effect of raising awareness among parents about standards and quality in childcare services. This in turn may lead to an increase in demand for services in the formal sectors. Moreover, the absence of the availability of after-school services identifies a need for provision, particularly for working parents.

These conclusions have been further substantiated by the findings relating to parents preferences for services. Findings demonstrate a clearly significant gap in the number of parents who used services for their children compared with parents who would use services if convenient and affordable services were available. These findings again highlight the absence and need for services specifically for the after-school age group. The situations for parents in rural areas, and for parents who were living alone were particularly acute.

Parents generally expressed a greater preference for more formal services provided by community or health board services, and services which would offer a more organised programme of activities.

Furthermore, the findings not only highlight the gaps in availability of formal services, they also indicate a very discernible absence of formal childcare information services. The Child Care Act, 1991 clearly states that: *A health board shall make available to any interested party information on pre-school services in the area, whether provided by the Board or otherwise.* Future developments, following implementation of the Act, will possibly give rise to the creation of childcare information services which would be widely accessible. Increased availability of information is likely to lead to increased awareness by parents and possibly to higher demands for more formal care services.

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate the extensive use by parents of informal childcare services, but more significantly highlight the limited availability and high demand for formal childcare services, particularly for the after-school age groups. The study has thus clearly identified a gap in the market in relation to provision of services and needs by parents. Although the survey was confined to Limerick city and county, it is considered that given the urban/rural breakdown of the sample, the level of employment and unemployment, and that city and county comprise both areas of advantage and disadvantage that the findings could be reasonably taken as representative of other parts of the country.

In consequence, it is considered that the identified gap between use and preference for services can be justifiably used when estimating the potential for an increase in provision of services and subsequently, the potential for employment in the sector.

PART II

Introduction to Part II

Part II will outline the findings from

- two micro surveys of the needs of parents for community crèches in their localities. The surveys were conducted in a rural and an urban environment.
- a telephone survey of companies in the Shannon Development region regarding the availability of workplace childcare facilities;
- other studies conducted during the course of this study by other agencies which will also relate to the findings of this research.

The Micro Surveys

Introduction to the Micro Surveys

While the primary survey in this research was undertaken to explore parents' use and needs for childcare services in general, two micro studies were also undertaken to investigate parents' needs for a specific service in their own community. The micro studies resulted from requests by a community centre and a community group for assistance in establishing childcare services in their areas. The micro studies were included in the overall research design as their findings were seen to complement the major survey.

The community centre was situated in Moyross, Limerick city and the community group was in Newmarket-on-Fergus in Co. Clare. Both were situated in socially disadvantaged areas, one was in an urban environment and the second was in a rural locality. The Moyross centre already had a crèche in operation but was expanding its services with the opening of a new purpose built crèche. There was no community service as yet in operation in Newmarket-on-Fergus but a local group was interested in investigating the need for such a service in the area.

Survey 1- The Moyross Community Centre crèche

Objective

The objective of this survey was to investigate the awareness of parents in the area of the existing community crèche and to identify their preferences for an expanded service in the new purpose-built building.

Methodology

A house to house survey was undertaken in the nine major housing areas in the locality. Ten parents, randomly selected, in each part completed questionnaires. The houses were visited by an interviewer who assisted respondents with the questions.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to address issues of specific interest to the Moyross community centre. Firstly, it looked at respondents' awareness, use and satisfaction of the current crèche services. Secondly, questions explored parents' opinions as to what the new crèche should provide. (See Appendix 3 for questions.)

The Findings

The following is a summary of the main findings of the survey which are of interest to the present study.

Awareness of the community crèche service:

Respondents who used the facilities	74%
Respondents who knew about it from a "friend, relative, neighbour"	76%
Respondents who knew of it from statutory agency e.g. health board personnel	5%

The main criteria for using the community crèche

The crèche was the only childcare service available in the area.	27%
The crèche was in a convenient location.	25%
The crèche was reasonably priced.	20%

Use of crèche

The majority of respondents used the crèche on two days a week and brought the children to the crèche at 9.30 a.m.

The main reasons for using/not using the crèche

Using the crèche: To allow respondent to go to work FAS CE scheme/training course 60%

Not using the crèche:

Relatives/ neighbours of the respondent minded the child or that the child was too old to attend the crèche. 50%

crèche was too far from where respondent lived. 24%

Findings regarding the new service:

Respondents who would use the crèche Over 25%

Average number of hours respondents would use the crèche per day. 4 Hours

Preferred starting time for respondents at the crèche 9.00am

Preferred finishing time for respondents at the crèche 1.00-2.00 pm.

Respondents who prefer children to stay at the crèche during lunchtime and who would like their children to have a lunch provided. over 50%

Survey 2- The Newmarket-On-Fergus Community crèche

The Objective

The objective of this survey was to identify and examine the potential need by residents in the Newmarket-on-Fergus locality for the use of a community crèche. The findings would be used in the feasibility study for establishing a community crèche in the area.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by local interviewers who visited homes where there were children of school-going age resident. Parents (or guardians) of the children were requested to complete questionnaires with the assistance of the interviewers.

The survey sample was chosen from households in housing areas selected by the Community group office. The selected areas comprised of households within a mixed range of socio-economic backgrounds and included respondents living in both local authority housing and non-local authority housing.

The survey was smaller than the Moyross survey. However, it was felt that the 50 houses identified, which amounted to 18% of the number of houses in the selected areas, would be an adequate and representative size.

The Questionnaire

Similar to the Moyross survey, the questionnaire was designed to look at issues of particular relevance to the community group and the feasibility study. The questionnaires therefore differed accordingly. Questions in the Newmarket-on-Fergus questionnaire enquired into the type of care used by respondents, level of satisfaction and costs of the services. Questions covered whether parents would use a community crèche and what their needs would be if they were using the service. (See Appendix 4 for questions).

The Findings

The following is a summary of the responses to the questionnaire.

Profile of Respondents

The majority (84%) of respondents were the mothers of the children.

There was an almost equal division (42%) of respondents from local authority housing and from those living in other types of accommodation (50%). 32% of mothers of the children were "in a FÁS Community Employment Scheme /Part-time work" ; 28% were "full-time Homemakers"; whereas 70% of the fathers of the children were in "full time employment". More than 50% of those unemployed or full-time homemakers stated that they were seeking part-time or full-time work.

Children of respondents

52% of the children of respondents were of pre-school age and 48% were older.

Childcare use

56% of children were availing of some form of childcare in addition to that provided by their parents. The majority (39%) of such care was provided by "relatives other than the mother or father".

Almost 60% of respondents who used childcare did not disclose information relating to their childcare costs which does not allow for an accurate estimate of current child care costs in the area.

Findings regarding the new service:

Respondents who would use a community crèche	Over 86% 78% pre-school, 22% after-school
Average number of days majority of respondents would use the crèche.	5
Preferred starting time for majority of respondents at the crèche	9.00am Pre-school 2.30 pm After-school
Preferred finishing time for majority of respondents at the crèche	5.00-6.00 pm.
Main activities which the majority of respondents would prefer to be available at the crèche.	1.Educational/ homework 2.Creative art 3.Messy play
Main reason the majority of respondents would use the crèche.	To allow the child to socialise and play with other children.

Of the respondents who said that they would use the crèche, the total number of children they would bring to the crèche would be 61.

The Micro Surveys

Summary

Although both surveys sought to establish parents needs for services, the questionnaires were designed to address issues of specific interest to each particular group. Therefore the results are only partially comparable. However, the following highlights the similarity of needs of parents in both communities.

The surveys provide evidence that some form of childcare service or assistance is required by parents on a regular basis in both areas for their children. The findings show that a considerable number of parents would use a community service to enable children to socialise with other children and also in order for parents to work or to attend FAS schemes or training courses. It also emerged that the majority of parents in the two areas would use the facilities at different times between 9.00 am and 6.00pm.

Comparison Of The Two Micro Surveys And The Main School Survey.

The following table outlines a brief comparison of the results of the main school survey and the two micro surveys.

Table 9: Comparison of the main school survey and the two micro surveys.

Results	School Survey	Micro Survey 1 ¹	Micro Survey 2 ²
The main respondent	Mother (90%)	Not Asked	Mother (84%)
Respondents who used or were using childcare services	Pre-school (64%) After-school (22%)	Pre-school (74%) After-school (N/A)	Pre-school (61%) After-school (50%)
The main type of pre-school service used.	Playgroup (38%)	Not asked.	Child's relative (40%)
The main type of after-school service used.	Child's relative (38%)	Not asked.	Child's relative (37%)
Respondents who would use childcare services³	Pre-school (72%)§ After-school (N/A)	After-school (41%) Pre-school (68%)	Pre-school (25%) After-school (22%)
Main reason childcare is required.	To allow the mother/father to go to work/ FAS CE scheme /training course (54%)	To allow the mother/father to go to work/FAS CE scheme / training course (60%)	To allow the child to socialise & play with other children (64%)
Main reason for choosing the particular childcare service/ community crèche	Location (35%)	Crèche was the only service in the area (27%). Location (25%)	Not applicable.
Average number of days childcare service/ community crèche is required.⁴	5 days (46%)	Not asked.	5 days (36%)
Preferred starting time for the childcare service /community crèche.	9.00am (pre-school) 3.00pm (after-school)	9.00am (pre-school)	9.00am (pre-school) 2.30pm (after-school)
Preferred finishing time for the childcare service /community crèche.	5.00-6.00 (both)	1.00-2.00 pm (pre-school)	5.00-6.00 (pre-school & after-school)
Preferred activities at the childcare service/ community crèche.	1st : Cultural ⁵ 2nd: Playing outdoors 3rd: Educational	Not asked.	1st : Educational 2nd : Creative Art 3rd: Messy play
How respondents heard about service.	Relative, friend, neighbour. (54%) Statutory personnel e.g. health staff (1%)	Relative, friend, neighbour. (76%) Statutory personnel e.g. health staff (5%)	Not applicable.

¹ Micro Survey 1: Questions refer to the new creche services

² Micro Survey 2 : Questions refer to a potential new community creche service

³ The question for the School Survey ended with "... if affordable & convenient services were available". The question for the two other micro surveys refers to the new services which are likely to be available.

⁴ % relates to those respondents who stated that they would use the services.

⁵ Cultural includes : music, singing & Dancing

THE COMPANY SURVEY

Objective

This survey aimed to complement the school survey regarding the low level of use of childcare services in the workplace. The survey did this by exploring what childcare services, if any, were currently provided for employees by companies in the Shannon area. The Shannon area includes counties Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and parts of Kerry and Offaly.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by telephone of the manufacturing and international services companies in the Shannon region. Companies were selected with staff numbering 100 and more, from the SFADCO database of companies in the region. It was considered that companies with smaller staff numbers would be less likely to have the resources to provide childcare services on site or locally. The SFADCO database contained 75 companies with 18,500 staff.

The companies were contacted without prior notice. In each of the companies, efforts were made to contact the personnel officer, in the first instance. In the cases where this was not possible, the shop steward, union representative /member or manager were approached. Of the 75 companies contacted, 68 companies (91%) in total responded.

The following questions were asked:

1. Does the company currently provide any childminding or crèche facilities?
2. Have the staff expressed any interest to the company or the union regarding the provision of childcare services by the company?
3. If the staff were to express an interest, would the company be willing to consider providing services?

The Findings

The following are the general responses to the questions:

1. None of the companies surveyed currently provide any kind of childcare services. However, one company in Limerick is at present currently preparing plans to set up such a facility. Staff numbers are approximately 1,500 and represent a young workforce.
2. In approximately half of the companies, it was felt that the staff may have expressed some interest at some point, however this was 'not serious', 'only light-hearted', or 'only jokingly'.

In some of the companies in which the workforce was mainly male, the respondents' responses indicated that no one would have any need for a childcare service. In other companies, even where there was a predominantly female workforce, very few women had expressed a serious interest in the provision of services to either the personnel / human resources departments or to the union representatives.

When asked why staff had not expressed any interest, the following reasons were given:

- it was generally assumed that employees would have already made previous arrangements outside of work;
- that employees did not expect the company to provide such services and so did not ask for any to be provided;
- that as the company was situated on an industrial estate, it was not considered a suitable environment for children;
- the workforce were too old, all the children of the employees were past the pre-school age;
- the employees came to work to get a break from the family and did not want the additional concerns of combining their work and family responsibilities under the 'same roof'.

3. Two companies said that they would be very willing to consider providing childcare services if their staff requested such facilities.

The majority of companies indicated that they would not provide any childcare services, either due to lack of interest, lack of space or budget constraints. These were not official company policies but were the attitudes communicated by most of the company staff or union members spoken to. The remaining companies had no comment to make on policies regarding workplace facilities.

Regarding the lack of interest by employees in childcare services, one union member responded that if each staff member was asked the question: "would you use childcare services at the workplace if professionally run services were provided and subsidised by the company?", that 90-95% of staff would be interested in such a service. However, a more detailed survey of employees' preferences would be required to further substantiate this opinion.

Conclusion

The survey was undertaken of manufacturing and international services companies in the Shannon Development region and was restricted to companies with staff numbering over 100 employees. It would appear from the companies surveyed that, with the exception of one company, companies were neither providing nor planning to provide any childcare service for its employees.

The reasons given were related to :

- the lack of interest by the employees themselves;
- the lack of interest by the employers;
- the low awareness of employees that the provision of childcare facilities could be raised as an employees or union issue;
- the age of employees in some companies meant that children were too old for pre-school facilities. There was no consideration for new and younger employees entering the company who may require services for their children;
- the budget restraints of many companies.

Although employees may eagerly use workplace crèches if appropriate facilities were provided by companies, it is difficult to affirm this without a further study of employees preferences and their awareness of possible childcare options which could be provided by their employers.

Furthermore, employers may also be open to providing childcare facilities if they are requested to do so by their employees or if they were made aware of the benefits of introducing childcare facilities as part of family-friendly initiatives in the workplace. As referred to earlier, many employers are more willing to assist employees in combining family responsibilities with work. Flexible working hours, part-time work and career breaks have already been widely introduced into many large companies in the Shannon region.

It is recognised that other employers from the non-manufacturing sector and from manufacturing companies with less than 100 employees in the area may be providing childcare facilities for employees. However, this survey substantiates the findings of the school survey which indicates that employer-provided childcare services in the region is at present very low or non-existent.

Contemporary Research into Childcare in Ireland

During the timeframe of this research, studies by other statutory and voluntary agencies of child care services and related issues were undertaken. These studies are outlined below:

The Commission on the Family

In 1996, the Commission on the Family commissioned the ESRI to undertake a nationwide childcare survey. The survey was conducted through their monthly Living and Consumer study and covered 1,500 households per month over a three month period from the end of 1996 to early 1997.

The study investigated the practical day to day arrangements and informal care arrangements of children up to the age of twelve and the extent to which these services support families. The type of care services covered included all arrangements e.g. relatives, crèches, nurseries, local childminders, etc. The findings were expected to be published in June/July 1997. Publication of the findings was delayed until December 1997 and so have not been included in this research.

Joint Oireachtas Committee On Women's Rights

This study investigated childcare provision in Ireland with a view to making recommendations regarding unmet needs and policy direction. Phase 1 of the study involved surveying crèche facilities through a postal questionnaire to services listed by health boards, community services and Golden Pages etc. The research commenced in January 1997. While Phase 1 of the study was completed, a change in Government resulted in a delay of the publication of this study and so its findings have not been included in this research.

Intereg (NIPPA/IPPA) Cross Border Rural Child Care Project

This research explored the current availability of childcare in six border counties (three in the South and three in the North). Based on the findings of the surveys, it is expected that a child care service will be established to address some of the unmet needs of the rural areas.

This research commenced in January 1997 for a two year period. It was envisaged that the survey would be conducted in the first six months and the services would be set up at the end of this period. It was thus hoped that the findings of the survey would be available for inclusion in this present research. However, publication of findings have been delayed and have not therefore being referred to.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSIONS

This chapter draws together the main findings of the research and outlines the prevalent issues which have emerged regarding employment of childcare workers in Ireland. It highlights some of the indicators which can be used when analysing and projecting this potential and the corresponding limitations and difficulties in making such analyses and projections.

The Framework of the Research

The main objective of this report was to explore the employment potential within the childcare sector in Ireland. Numerous reports have highlighted difficulties in examining the various dimensions of the childcare area, particularly here in Ireland, due to the lack of national statistics. In the absence of such data, the research adopted two methods of compiling information. One method was through an extensive literature review and also through the use of Census and Labour Force Survey findings. The second method involved several surveys relating to childcare usage and the needs of parents.

The research was divided into two sections. The first section of the research considered trends in childcare within the Irish and international context. It was envisaged that in identifying these trends, indicators could be elicited which could be used in future estimations of growth in the childcare area and corresponding developments for the employment of personnel.

The second section in the research was a study of current use and needs of parents regarding childcare both for the pre-school and after-school age groups. It was hoped that further insights into future potential for services and accompanying potential for employment might be elicited. Four surveys were undertaken in the course of this section of the research. An extensive survey of parents' views and experiences was undertaken in Limerick city and county. Two minor surveys, one urban and one rural, also looked at parents' views regarding childcare services but more specifically in terms of the establishment and extension of a community crèche in their own locality. Finally, a survey of companies in the Shannon region provided an overview of the provision of and policies in relation to workplace childcare facilities.

Indicators

The following is an outline of some of the emerging social developments in contemporary society relevant to this report and the resulting needs for childcare facilities which were identified in the course of the research. These developments and trends have been characterised as indicators and are grouped into numeric and non-numeric sections. The numeric section relates to indicators which have been drawn from statistical data, particularly CSO and LFS sources. The non-numeric section relates to trends based on reports and studies from Ireland and overseas.

1. The developmental context of childcare

This trend relates to the changing attitudes and increased awareness of the value of childcare as a social and educational aspect of the child's short-term and long-term development. This trend is analysed within the following context:

- the increasing use by parents of childcare services which are fundamentally aimed at the child's development,
- the expansion in numbers of such developmental centred services e.g. playgroups, naoinra,
- the use by the state of childcare services for children in disadvantaged circumstances as a means of addressing the children's developmental vulnerability.

2. The use of childcare as a form of family support

The extension of childcare services is an important aspect of family support to prevent the following :

- serious family crisis and breakdown,
- children undergoing stress and neglect,
- children being removed from their families and neighbourhoods,
- children being admitted to public care,
- impairments in children's social/emotional development.

3. *The changing patterns of family structure*

Changing parental roles within the family, the increase in the numbers of births outside marriage and marital breakdown has given rise to an extension in the need for child care. Furthermore, there is greater awareness and pressure on the state and the labour market to offer such provision.

4. *The increasing numbers of women entering, re-entering and remaining in the workforce*

The growing participation of women in the labour force, particularly women with children, implies that there will be an accompanying increasing demand for a variety of childcare services.

5. *Improved working conditions and increases in part-time and atypical work*

- The expansion of atypical and part-time work is seen to predominantly and positively affect female employment,
- The increasing awareness by employers of the benefits of accommodating staff, to cope with their family responsibilities, including the direct provision of childcare services.

6. *Legislation and policy approaches at national level*

There is a growing policy orientation in recent years at both national and European level towards introducing legislation and initiatives which

- address issues of inequality;
- offer supports to women and men in reconciling their work and family responsibilities;
- support families e.g. lone parents allowances, maintenance orders, etc.,
- attempt to regulate childcare services.

Demographic Trends

The following are some of the national demographic and socio-economic trends from CSO and LFS data which may be used to estimate the need and demand for childcare services:

7. *The Birth Rate and Working Mothers*

Based on fertility and mobility trends, it would appear that child population figures in Ireland will continue to decline.

Decreasing population figures however do not necessarily mean that the need for childcare services will decrease. With fertility rates down to under two children, and female education levels increasing, it would appear that women, will continue to work during motherhood. Women have shown a significant increase in labour force participation since 1971. The declining birth figure will be therefore offset by the increasing participation of women with children in the labour force.

8. *Births Outside of Marriage*

Births outside of marriage continue to increase, particularly to mothers under 25 years of age.

9. *Both Partners Working*

Evidence shows that there is an increasing number of situations where both partners (either married or cohabiting) work, which is likely to affect families' disposable income.

10. *Women's Income Levels*

Average earnings by women have increased in the period 1971 to 1996, and the gap between women and men's earnings is decreasing. The spending power of parents is increasing and they therefore are potentially able to afford more non family childcare services.

11. *The Growth in the Service Sector*

Research suggests that the growth in the service sector has attracted greater numbers of women out of agriculture since the sixties. This could mean that fewer women in rural areas are likely to be home-based and therefore available to care for their children. As the service sector is expanding, it is likely that women's overall participation rates will continue to increase.

Current Usage and Needs for Childcare Services

Surveys provide a useful opportunity to collect first-hand information on issues relating to the childcare needs of parents. Given the current paucity of original data in this area in Ireland, particularly regarding after-school care, the surveys conducted in the course of this research represent a significant contribution to the general research in this field.

The following provides summaries of the main findings of the surveys.

The School Survey

An extensive survey of parents views and experiences was conducted in the Limerick city and county region. The following information emerged relating to current provision and preferences for pre-school and after-school services.

Current use of services by parents amounted to 64% of pre-school services and 22% of after-school services. The main types of pre-school services used were playgroups (38%) followed by childminders/neighbours (27%). The after-school age group used childminders/neighbours (49%) and relatives (38%).

The numbers of parents who stated that they would use both services increased significantly on the basis of the provision of more affordable and convenient services. For the pre-school age group the number of parents rose from 64% to 72% and more significantly for the after-school group from 22% to 41%.

17% of parents would prefer to have a greater provision of services by community services or the health board for the pre-school child. One in three parents stated that they would prefer the availability of after-school services in the child's school, and one in five preferred the community services or health board. These figures indicate a gap between the availability of group services and the services which parents would prefer and potentially use.

Other issues which emerged from the findings related to :

- Parents' main criteria for choosing childcare services - over a third of parents stated location of services as being their first reason.
- Most parents would prefer more interactive and organised activities in the programmes at the childcare services. For the after-school group the emphasis was on homework/educational activities and music.
- The number of days that the majority of parents would require services was five.
- The main reason why parents require childcare services for their children was to allow them to work or to participate in training and education.
- The levels of insurance and qualification of service providers appears low which may reflect the extensive use of informal childminders and relatives by parents. The majority of parents who used group care, particularly playgroups, stated that the service providers had insurance and qualifications.
- The findings highlighted the extensive use by parents of informal methods in sourcing childcare information services. Only 2% of parents stated they received information from statutory sources.

Conclusions of the School Survey

The survey outlined current usage of services by parents and indicated a significant gap between usage and preferences by parents in the types of services available. The gaps were particularly discernible for the after-school age group. It may be assumed that with increased knowledge of health board inspected services, there will be an increased awareness and demand by parents for quality group services. This in turn will have implications for employment potential.

The Community crèche Surveys

Two other surveys undertaken in the course of the research also supported the findings of the above school survey. The Moyross community centre crèche and the Newcastle-on-Fergus community crèche surveys clearly demonstrated parents need for community childcare services in their locality and their interest in the

provision of an organised child-centred programme. Their demand for services was based on their own need to take up employment and enrol on work-schemes, together with the needs of their children to develop and socialise.

The Survey of Workplace Childcare Services

A survey of 75 manufacturing and international services companies with employees in excess of 100 in the Shannon Development region was undertaken and indicated the distinct lack of workplace childcare in the area. The absence of provision by employers was seen to be linked to company policy decisions, budget restrictions or to the lack of demand expressed by the employees.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there would appear to be clear evidence to support the likelihood of a growth in the employment of personnel in the childcare sector. The research has identified specific indicators which can be used to demonstrate both the increasing needs and demands for childcare services, and which in turn have a corresponding link to the employment of childcare personnel.

The following table offers a simple model which could be used to derive potential employment figures from the above mentioned trends.

Table 10 Model of trends and indicators for use in deriving potential employment figures.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dependent Variable	Employment Potential
Number of Pre- & Afterschool Children	Number of Children Demanding Services	Availability of Services to Meet Demand	↑ in Number of Personnel Employed by Services
% Increase in Women's Employment (see note below)	% Increase in Need for Childcare Services	% Increase in Provision of Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel
% Increase in Women's Employment (see note below)	% Increase in Family Income levels	% Increase in Demand for Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel
% Increase in State Subsidised Services	% Take-up of Places by Parents	% Increase in Provision of Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel
% Decrease in Fertility Levels/ Family Size	% Increase in Women's Employment	% Increase in Demand for Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel
% Increase in Births Outside Marriage	% Increase in State Subsidised Services	% Increase in Provision of Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel
% Increase in Part-time & Atypical Work	% Increase in Women's Employment	% Increase in Demand for Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel
% Increase in Work in Services Sector	% Increase in Women's Employment	% Increase in Demand for Childcare Services	% ↑ in Employment of Childcare Personnel

Note: "Increase in Women's Employment" has two dependent variables which lead to an increased demand in child care services:

- a) **need** for child care services in terms of enabling mothers to go to work and
- b) increased financial ability to **afford** and pay for child care services.

Limitations of the Model

1. It is assumed that increased demand will result in increased supply of services. However, it is well known that the childcare sector is currently poorly paid with few incentives to attract new providers or employees. Automatic increases in supply in response to demand by the commercial sector and by employees may not necessarily evolve and can be affected by a range of other factors.
2. Furthermore, where the assumption relates to supply meeting increases in demand, there may not be an adequately trained reserve of childcare employees to work in the expanding sector, particularly in light of a national training system which has lacked accreditation.
3. The outcome of how childcare services will develop in response to inspections by health boards following the introduction of the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 1996 is still quite uncertain. There is a view that it could take up to five years before systems (inspections and databases) are organised in all health boards and for childcare services to either adapt to the regulations or to close down completely. Concerns exist that the changes required by the regulations are prohibitive, particularly as incomes are already inadequate.
4. A major consideration which was not included in the identification of indicators and which could affect substantially behaviour and preferences relates to the introduction by the state of childcare subsidies. State subsidies could assist childcare providers to offset the financial demands of the regulations which may force many out of business or allow providers to upgrade and expand their current provision.

Furthermore, subsidies would undoubtedly affect parents demands for services and the decision of mothers to return or remain within the workforce, particularly where childcare becomes more affordable and accessible, and the quality of services improve. In the same way, a more comprehensive system of parental leave would be another significant factor influencing behaviour and preferences if introduced.

5. Many trends have emerged from reports on the experiences of other countries. The same socio-economic developments may not emanate in Ireland as elsewhere. It is therefore difficult to predict how quickly the independent and dependent variables will evolve and how other factors may arise in the interim to affect the process and the end result.

The Need for a Coherent Policy

There are limits, as discussed, to any projections regarding the employment of childcare personnel in Ireland. The major issues, excluding the uncertainties which are common to all socio-economic estimates, relate primarily to the fragmented system of childcare in Ireland to date, the lack of co-ordination by the state in the development and monitoring of services and the absence of an extensive and uniform database of all service providers presently and in the past.

The implementation of the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 1996 to a large extent is a first step in addressing these issues and future policy decisions will be greatly enhanced by the accurate compilation of information on pre-school service providers. However, unless supervision and monitoring is extended to all childcare services including all childminding facilities and after-school care, information on childcare services will remain limited and speculative. Furthermore, monitoring of parents' changing needs and aspirations regarding their children will be crucial to the planning of future childcare services.

OUTCOME

The research has identified significant indicators to be used in the projection of the employment potential in the childcare sector. A simple model of indicators is offered which can make a useful contribution to future assessments of childcare developments.

The research clearly establishes that, given current trends, the provision of childcare services will be, at a minimum, maintained and, at an optimum level increased substantially. The corresponding increases in the employment of childcare personnel are likewise anticipated.

APPENDIX 1

Table 1. Schools selected for and willing to participate in the childcare survey.

SCHOOL	Junior Infants	4TH Class
1 (URBAN)	27	31
2 (URBAN)	37	0
3 (URBAN)	36	16
4 (URBAN)	25	23
5 (URBAN)	15	17
6 (URBAN)	26	0
7 (URBAN)	35	35
SUB-TOTAL	201	122
8 (RURAL)	20	20
9 (RURAL)	28	0
10 (RURAL)	14	0
11 (RURAL)	0	4
12 (RURAL)	35	40
13 (RURAL)	17	3
14 (RURAL)	31	14
15 (RURAL)	*0	35
16 (RURAL)	17	18
17 (RURAL)	10	13
18 (RURAL)	12	8
19 (RURAL)	16	20
20 (RURAL)	3	13
TOTAL	404	310

Table 2. Distribution and return of questionnaires to schools for childcare survey.

SCHOOL	Junior Infants	Junior Infants Returned	Response Rate	4th Class	4th Class Returned	Response Rate
1 (URBAN)	27	13	48%	31	21	68%
2 (URBAN)	37	10	27%	0	0	0%
3 (URBAN)	36	21	58%	16	7	44%
4 (URBAN)	25	10	40%	23	16	70%
5 (URBAN)	15	6	40%	17	7	41%
6 (URBAN)	26	19	73%	0	0	0%
7 (URBAN)	35	14	40%	35	19	54%
SUB-TOTAL	201	93	46%	122	70	57%
8 (RURAL)	20	10	50%	20	13	65%
9 (RURAL)	28	16	57%	0	0	0%
10 (RURAL)	14	10	71%	0	0	0%
11 (RURAL)	0	0	0%	4	4	100%
12 (RURAL)	35	18	51%	40	33	83%
13 (RURAL)	17	11	65%	3	3	100%
14 (RURAL)	31	18	58%	14	12	86%
15 (RURAL)	0	0	0%	35	19	54%
16 (RURAL)	17	10	59%	18	9	50%
17 (RURAL)	10	10	100%	13	11	85%
18 (RURAL)	12	9	75%	8	6	75%
19 (RURAL)	16	6	38%	20	11	55%
20 (RURAL)	3	2	67%	13	10	77%
TOTAL	404	213	53%	310	201	65%

APPENDIX 2 SAMPLES OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR SCHOOL SURVEY

Appendix 2: Covering letter to parents of Junior Infants Class accompanying questionnaires.

ALL INFORMATION IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL - NO NAMES WILL APPEAR ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE for Parents (or Guardians) of Children in Junior Infants
Class regarding Childcare for their child.

Please answer the questions in terms of the **6th MONTH PERIOD BEFORE your child started in Junior Infants**. For example: if your child started Junior Infants in September 1996, give information relating to the period March / April 1996. Please tick ✓ where appropriate, in some questions you may need to tick more than one box.

For the purpose of this Questionnaire, "**CHILDCARE**" includes any type of child care, whether public or private, individual or collective such as the following:

- Any RELATIVE of the Child other than Mother/Father such as Grandmother, Grandfather, Aunt, Cousin etc.
- NEIGHBOUR
- CRÈCHE OR NURSERY managed by a private individual, workplace, or by your Community /Social Services /Health Board (usually from age 3 months and older)
- MOTHER & CHILD GROUP or PARENT & CHILD GROUP
- PLAYGROUP (usually 2-3 hour sessions for the 3-5 year age group)
- CHILDMINDER in the Childminder's Home
- CHILDMINDER in the Child's Home (or Au Pair)

Please answer the following question to decide which Questionnaire you should complete:

QUESTION: Did anyone else, other than the Mother /Father / Guardian of your child, help with the care of your child during the week? YES ≤ NO ≤

IF 'YES' → ANSWER QUESTIONS IN
THE **BLUE QUESTIONNAIRE** ONLY

IF 'NO' → ANSWER QUESTIONS IN
THE **YELLOW QUESTIONNAIRE** ONLY

Many thanks for your time and co-operation in this research.

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JUNIOR INFANT CLASS.

COMPLETE THE BLUE QUESTIONNAIRE ONLY if you previously used a childcare service or a childminder. Remember **ONLY** answer the questions in terms of the **6th MONTH PERIOD BEFORE** your child started in Junior Infants.

If your child attended a combination of childcare or childminding services, **ONLY** answer in relation to the **ONE** most frequently used.

1. Were you living in **LIMERICK CITY** YES NO

2. Tick the box in the following list to describe your relationship to the child:

MOTHER	FATHER	GUARDIAN
OTHER (Please specify):		

3. Who else helped you with the care of your child on a regular basis (more than once a week):

<i>(Only tick the one most frequently used)</i>	
Child's Relative <u>other than</u> Mother/Father	
Neighbour	
Workplace crèche/Nursery	
Community /Social Services /Health Board crèche or Nursery	
Private crèche/Nursery	
Mother & Child Group	
Playgroup	
Childminder in the Childminder's Home	
Childminder in the Child's Home (or Au Pair)	
Other (Please specify)	

4. Tick your **MAIN REASON** for looking for a childcare service or a childminder ?

	Main Reason
To allow the MOTHER/FATHER to go to work / FAS CE scheme / training course	
To allow the MOTHER/FATHER to do other things e.g. housework/hobbies	
To help the child to develop learning skills	
To help the child to develop social skills	
To allow the child to socialise and play with other children	
Other (specify)	

5. How many days on average every week did you use the childcare service / childminder? _____

6. What time did your child go to the childcare service/childminder on average every day? _____

7. What time did your child finish at the childcare service/childminder on average every day? _____

8. Did your child stay at the childcare service/childminder during lunchtime? YES NO

9. What were the **3 MAIN REASONS** for choosing the **particular** childcare service/ childminder that you used?

	1st Reason	2nd Reason	3rd Reason
Convenient location			
Free or reasonably priced or subsidised service			
Child got on well with the person /staff			
You knew the person well yourself			
Convenient hours			
Was the only childcare service available			
Child needed a one-to-one relationship			
Child's brother / sister went there			
Caters for Special Needs			
Good quality service and activities			
Good facilities			
Well qualified and experienced staff			
Mother / Father could be involved in the activities			
Other reasons (specify)			

10. Tick the **3 MAIN DAILY ACTIVITIES** in the following list that your child did when he or she was at the childcare service/childminder : *(Tick II more than one if necessary)*

Helped with domestic activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Watched TV <input type="checkbox"/>
Music, dancing, singing <input type="checkbox"/>	Taken on outings <input type="checkbox"/>	Sport <input type="checkbox"/>
Messy play (with water & sand etc.) <input type="checkbox"/>	Played outdoors <input type="checkbox"/>	Played indoors <input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Educational activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):		

Question 11	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Did the childminder/childcare service have any childcare insurance?			
Did the childminder/childcare staff have any childcare qualifications?			

12. How **SATISFIED** were you with the childcare you used:

VERY SATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>	SATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>	DISSATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>	VERY DISSATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>
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13. What was your main reason **if you were NOT satisfied** with the childcare you used?

Location was unsuitable <input type="checkbox"/>	Too expensive <input type="checkbox"/>	Building was not purpose built or properly adapted /facilities were not good <input type="checkbox"/>
Not enough staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Hours were unsuitable <input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of activities and service was not good <input type="checkbox"/>
Not enough discipline & control of children's behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>		Too much discipline & control of children's behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>
Qualifications & experience of staff were inadequate <input type="checkbox"/>		Not enough affection and warmth shown to the child <input type="checkbox"/>
Other reason (specify) :		

14. Would you have preferred a different type of childcare for your child? Yes NO

- IF 'YES', ANSWER QUESTIONS 15 TO 29.
- IF 'NO', ANSWER QUESTIONS 21 TO 29 ONLY.

15. What kind of regular **CHILDCARE SERVICE/ CHILDMINDER** would you have preferred for your child?

	Tick Preference
Child's Father /Mother or Other Relative	
Workplace crèche/Nursery	
Community /Social Services /Health Board /crèche or Nursery	
Mother & Child Group	
Childminder in the Childminder's Home	
Private crèche/Nursery	
Childminder or Au Pair in the Child's Home	
Other (Please specify)	

16. How many days on average would you have **preferred** to use the childcare service/ childminder? _____

17. What time would you have **preferred** your child to start at the childcare service/ childminder on average every day? _____

18. What time would you have **preferred** your child to finish at the childcare service/ childminder on average every day? _____

19. Would you have preferred your child to stay at the childcare service/ childminder during lunchtime?
YES **NO**

20. Tick the **3 main ACTIVITIES** that you would have preferred your child to do:

Helping with domestic activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Watched TV <input type="checkbox"/>
Music, dancing, singing <input type="checkbox"/>	Going on outings <input type="checkbox"/>	Sport <input type="checkbox"/>
Messy play (with water & sand etc.) <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing outdoors <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing indoors <input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Educational activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):		

21. Would you have **preferred a different type** of childcare service for your child when he/she was **UNDER 2 YEARS?** YES NO

If 'YES', what kind of regular **CHILDCARE SERVICE / CHILDMINDER** would you have **preferred** for your child when he/she was **UNDER 2 YEARS?**

	Tick preference
Child's Father /Mother or Other Relative	
Workplace crèche/Nursery	
Community /Social Services /Health Board /crèche or Nursery	
Private crèche/Nursery	
Childminder in the Childminder's Home	
Mother & Child Group	
Childminder or Au Pair in the Child's Home	
Other (Please specify)	

22. **INFORMATION SERVICES:** Did you have difficulties in getting **INFORMATION** about what childcare services/ childminders were available in your area? YES NO

23. How did the you find out about the childcare service / childminder you used?

Through a professional such as a public health nurse, childcare advisor, social worker etc. <input type="checkbox"/>	You heard about it from a relative, friend, or neighbour <input type="checkbox"/>
Your older child went there <input type="checkbox"/>	Through an advertisement in a newspaper / the Golden Pages etc. <input type="checkbox"/>
Through the health board, health clinic or social services etc. <input type="checkbox"/>	Notice in a local shop/shopping centre/ leisure centre/ club etc. <input type="checkbox"/>
Other means <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify) :	

24. Tick the following box to describe your **Marital Status:**
(You may need to tick more than one box)

Single <input type="checkbox"/>	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>	Separated/Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>
Living With Your Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		

25. Tick the following box to describe your **Living Arrangements. WERE YOU :**

Living alone with your child/children <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with your relatives <input type="checkbox"/>
Living with your spouse/ partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with your spouse/partner and other relatives <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please give details):	

26. Tick the following box to describe your **Housing. WERE YOU LIVING IN :**

Your own home OR the family owned home <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Rented Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>
Corporation housing /Local Authority Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Hostel/Refuge Centre <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please give details):	

27. Tick the box in the following list to describe the **EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the MOTHER (or Guardian)** of the child:

A full-time Homemaker <input type="checkbox"/>	On a FAS CE Scheme or in Part-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
On a full-time training course <input type="checkbox"/>	In full-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)	

28. Tick the box in the following list to describe the **EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the FATHER (or Guardian)** of the child:

A full-time Homemaker <input type="checkbox"/>	On a FAS CE Scheme or in Part-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
On a full-time training course <input type="checkbox"/>	In full-time employment <input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)	

29. Add up **ALL** sources of **INCOME** into the home for an average week for you and your spouses/partner, then tick the box which indicates this total amount. (Include all income from all Social Welfare Benefits /Supplements, full-time & part-time work, casual work etc.):

£50 to £100 <input type="checkbox"/>	£201 to £300 <input type="checkbox"/>	£501 to £700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£101 to £150 <input type="checkbox"/>	£301 to £400 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over £700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£151 to £200 <input type="checkbox"/>	£401 to £500 <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>

COMPLETE THE YELLOW QUESTIONNAIRE ONLY if you did not use any childcare service or childminder. Remember ONLY answer the questions in terms of the 6th MONTH PERIOD BEFORE your child started in Junior Infants.

1. Were you living in **LIMERICK CITY** YES NO

2. Tick the box in the following list to describe your relationship to the child:

MOTHER	FATHER	GUARDIAN
OTHER (Please specify):		

3. Six months before your child started in Junior Infants, would you have used childcare services if **AFFORDABLE AND CONVENIENT SERVICES** were available? YES NO

If 'YES' → Answer **ALL** Questions except **Question 11**

If 'NO' → Answer **Questions 11 to 17 ONLY**

4. Tick your **MAIN REASON** why you would have used a childminder/childcare service:

	Main Reason
To allow the MOTHER/FATHER to go to work / FAS CE scheme / training course	
To allow the MOTHER/FATHER to do other things e.g. housework/hobbies	
To help the child to develop learning skills	
To help the child to develop social skills	
To allow the child to socialise and play with other children	
Other (specify)	

5. Tick the main type of **CHILDCARE SERVICE/CHILDMINDER** that you would you have liked for your child ?

	Tick Preference
Child's Relative other than Mother/Father	
Neighbour	
Workplace crèche/Nursery	
Community /Social Services /Health Board crèche or Nursery	
Private crèche/Nursery	
Mother & Child Group	
Playgroup	
Childminder in the Childminder's Home	
Childminder in the Child's Home (or Au Pair)	
Other (Please specify)	

6. Tick the **3 main ACTIVITIES** that you would have liked your child to do at the **CHILDMINDER /CHILDCARE SERVICE**.

Helped with domestic activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Watched TV <input type="checkbox"/>
Music, dancing, singing <input type="checkbox"/>	Taken on outings <input type="checkbox"/>	Sport <input type="checkbox"/>
Messy play (with water & sand etc.) <input type="checkbox"/>	Played outdoors <input type="checkbox"/>	Played indoors <input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Educational activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):		

7. How many days would you have used the childcare service/childminder on average every week:

8. What time would you have liked your child to go to the childcare service/childminder on average every day? _____

- 9 What time would you have liked your child to finish at the childcare service/childminder on average every day? _____
10. Would you have liked your child stay at the childcare service / childminder during lunchtime?
YES NO
11. Give your **MAIN REASON** if you would **NOT** have used **ANY CHILDCARE SERVICES/ CHILDMINDER** if **affordable, good quality and convenient services** were available:

	TICK REASON
You feel your child was too young to be cared for by anyone else other than the child's PARENT/GUARDIAN	
Your child had special needs	
Your child had a previous bad experience in a childcare service	
Your child did not want to go to any childcare service	
Other (specify):	

12. Tick the following box to describe your **Marital Status** :
(You may need to tick more than one box)

Single <input type="checkbox"/>	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>	Separated/Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>
Living With Your Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		

13. Tick the following box to describe your **Living Arrangements**. WERE YOU :

Living alone with your child/children <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with your relatives <input type="checkbox"/>
Living with your spouse/ partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with your spouse/partner and other relatives <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please give details):	

14. Tick the following box to describe your **Housing**. WERE YOU LIVING IN :

Your own home OR the family owned home <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Rented Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>
Corporation housing /Local Authority Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Hostel/Refuge Centre <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please give details):	

15. Tick the box in the following list to describe the **EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the MOTHER (or Guardian)** of the child:

A full-time Homemaker <input type="checkbox"/>	On a FAS CE Scheme or in Part-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
On a full-time training course <input type="checkbox"/>	In full-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)	

16. Tick the box in the following list to describe the **EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the FATHER (or Guardian)** of the child:

A full-time Homemaker <input type="checkbox"/>	On a FAS CE Scheme or in Part-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
On a full-time training course <input type="checkbox"/>	In full-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)	

17. Add up **ALL** sources of **INCOME** into the home for an average week for you and your spouses/partner, then tick the box which indicates this total amount. (Include all income from all Social Welfare Benefits /Supplements, full-time & part-time work, casual work etc.):

£50 to £100 <input type="checkbox"/>	£201 to £300 <input type="checkbox"/>	£501 to £700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£101 to £150 <input type="checkbox"/>	£301 to £400 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over £700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£151 to £200 <input type="checkbox"/>	£401 to £500 <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS OF 4TH CLASS CHILDREN.

COMPLETE THE BLUE QUESTIONNAIRE ONLY if you use a childcare service or childminder for your child when he/she finishes school in the afternoon.

Please give information regarding the MAIN Afterschool Service/Childminder that your child attends. If your child attends a combination of Afterschool or Childminding Services, ONLY answer in relation to the ONE most frequently used.

1. Were you living in **LIMERICK CITY** YES NO

2. Tick the box in the following list to describe your relationship to the child:

MOTHER	FATHER	GUARDIAN
OTHER (Please specify):		

3. Does your child attend any **AFTERSCHOOL CHILDCARE SERVICE / CHILDMINDER** on a regular basis (more than once a week) when he/she finishes school:

<i>(Tick ✓ more than one if necessary)</i>	
Child's Relative other than Mother/Father	
Neighbour	
Workplace crèche	
Afterschool Group in a Community Hall or Social Services /Health Board crèche	
Private crèche	
Parent & Child Group	
Afterschool Group in the Child's School	
Childminder in the Childminder's Home	
Childminder in the Child's Home (or Au Pair)	
Other (Please specify)	

4. Tick your **MAIN REASON** for your child attending An Afterschool Service or childminder ?

	Main Reason
To allow the MOTHER/FATHER to go to work / FAS CE scheme / training course	
To allow the MOTHER/FATHER to do other things e.g. housework/hobbies	
To help the child to develop learning skills	
To help the child to develop social skills	
To allow the child to socialise and play with other children	
Other (specify)	

5. How many days on average every week does your child attend the Afterschool Service / Childminder? _____

6. What time does your child go to the Afterschool Service / Childminder on average every day? _____

7. What time does your child finish at the Afterschool Service / Childminder on average every day?

8. What were the **3 MAIN REASONS** for choosing the **particular** childcare service/ childminder that you used?

	1st Reason	2nd Reason	3rd Reason
Convenient location			
Free or reasonably priced or subsidised service			
Child got on well with the person /staff			
Homely atmosphere			
You knew the person well yourself			
Convenient hours			
Was the only childcare service available			
Child needed a one-to-one relationship			
Child's brother / sister went there			
Good quality service and activities			
Good facilities			
Well qualified and experienced staff			
Mother / Father could be involved in the activities			
Other reasons (specify)			

9. Tick the **3 MAIN DAILY ACTIVITIES** in the following list that your child does when he or she is at the Afterschool Service/Childminder.

Helping with domestic activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Watching TV <input type="checkbox"/>
Music, dancing, singing <input type="checkbox"/>	Taken on outings <input type="checkbox"/>	Sport <input type="checkbox"/>
School homework <input type="checkbox"/>	Played outdoors <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing indoors <input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Educational activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):		

Question 10	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Did the childminder/childcare service have any childcare insurance?			
Did the childminder/childcare staff have any childcare qualifications?			

11. How **SATISFIED** were you with the childcare you used:

VERY SATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>	SATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>	DISSATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>	VERY DISSATISFIED <input type="checkbox"/>
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12. What was your main reason **if you were NOT satisfied** with the Afterschool Service/Childminder

Location was unsuitable <input type="checkbox"/>	Too expensive <input type="checkbox"/>	Building was not purpose built or properly adapted /facilities were not good <input type="checkbox"/>
Not enough staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsuitable Hours <input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of activities and service was not good <input type="checkbox"/>
Not enough discipline & control of children's behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>		Too much discipline & control of children's behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>
Qualifications & experience of staff were inadequate <input type="checkbox"/>		Not enough affection and warmth shown to the child <input type="checkbox"/>
Other reason (specify) :		

13. Would you prefer a different type of Afterschool Service/ Childminder for your child? Yes NO

- IF 'YES', ANSWER QUESTIONS 14 TO 26.
- IF 'NO', ANSWER QUESTIONS 19 TO 26 ONLY.

14. What kind of regular Afterschool Service/Childminder would you prefer for your child ?

	Tick Preference
Child's Relative other than Mother/Father	
Neighbour	
Workplace Crèche	
Afterschool Group in a Community Hall or Social Services /Health Board Crèche	
Private crèche/Nursery	
Parent & Child Group	
Afterschool Group in the Child's School	
Childminder in the Childminder's Home	
Childminder in the Child's Home (or Au Pair)	
Other (Please specify)	

15. How many days on average would you prefer to use an Afterschool Service / Childminder? _____

16. What time would you prefer your child to start at an Afterschool Service / Childminder on average every day? _____

17. What time would you prefer your child to finish at an Afterschool Service / Childminder on average every day? _____

18. Tick the 3 MAIN ACTIVITIES that you would prefer your child to do:

Helping with domestic activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Watched TV <input type="checkbox"/>
Music, dancing, singing <input type="checkbox"/>	Taken on outings <input type="checkbox"/>	Sport <input type="checkbox"/>
School Homework <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing outdoors <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing indoors <input type="checkbox"/>
Problem solving activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Educational activities <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):		

19. INFORMATION SERVICES: Did you have difficulties getting INFORMATION about what Afterschool Services / Childminders are available in your area? YES NO

20. How did the you find out about the Afterschool Service / Childminder you used?

Through a professional such as a doctor, public health nurse, social worker etc. <input type="checkbox"/>	You heard about it from a relative, friend, or neighbour <input type="checkbox"/>
Your older child went there health nurse,	Through an advertisement in a newspaper / the Golden Pages etc. <input type="checkbox"/>
From your child's school <input type="checkbox"/>	Can't remember <input type="checkbox"/>
Through the health board, health clinic or social services etc. <input type="checkbox"/>	Notice in a local shop/shopping centre/ leisure centre/ club etc. <input type="checkbox"/>
Other means <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify) :	

21. Tick the following box to describe your **Marital Status** :
(You may need to tick more than one box)

Single <input type="checkbox"/>	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>	Separated/Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>
Living With Your Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		

22. Tick the following box to describe your **Living Arrangements**. ARE YOU :

Living alone with your child/children <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with your relatives <input type="checkbox"/>
Living with your spouse/ partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Living with your spouse/partner and other relatives <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please give details):	

23. Tick the following box to describe your **Housing**. ARE YOU LIVING IN :

Your own home OR the family owned home <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Rented Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>
Corporation housing /Local Authority Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/>	Hostel/Refuge Centre <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please give details):	

24. Tick the box in the following list to describe the **EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the MOTHER (or Guardian)** of the child:

A full-time Homemaker <input type="checkbox"/>	On a FAS CE Scheme or in Part-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
On a full-time training course <input type="checkbox"/>	In full-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)	

25. Tick the box in the following list to describe the **EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the FATHER (or Guardian)** of the child:

A full-time Homemaker <input type="checkbox"/>	On a FAS CE Scheme or in Part-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
On a full-time training course <input type="checkbox"/>	In full-time Employment <input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)	

26. Add up **ALL** sources of **INCOME** into the home for an average week for you and your spouses/partner, then tick the box which indicates this total amount. (Include all income from all Social Welfare Benefits /Supplements, full-time & part-time work, casual work etc.):

£50 to £100 <input type="checkbox"/>	£201 to £300 <input type="checkbox"/>	£501 to £700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£101 to £150 <input type="checkbox"/>	£301 to £400 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over £700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£151 to £200 <input type="checkbox"/>	£401 to £500 <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>

We would welcome any additional comments you can offer regarding childcare services.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

APPENDIX 2

Reasons for not using childcare

Individual comments given by respondents for not using any childcare services are as follows:

- “I stayed at home to look after my child; that’s my job. She’s our responsibility.”
- “There’s always someone at home to mind her.”
- “I work from home.”
- “Mother is home all day.”
- “I would not leave my child with anyone I did not know.”
- “Child might not get same attention as at home.”
- “I manage a small playgroup from my own home.”
- “Wanted child in home environment.”
- “Only myself, my mother, my sister and my sister-in-law are allowed to mind my children.”
- “Owner of local childcare is quite unstable and the assistant is unqualified.”

APPENDIX 3: THE MOYROSS COMMUNITY CENTRE CRÈCHE - SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Q. 1 "Did you know there was a community crèche in Moyross?"

Q1. (b) "How did you find out about the crèche?"

REASON	Tick Preference
Through a professional (public health nurse, social worker)	
From a friend, relative, neighbour	
Through the newsletter	
Respondents older child went there	

Q. 2 "Have you ever used the crèche facility?"

Q.3 "If you used the crèche, were you satisfied with the services provided?"

(b) Give reasons if answering 'NO' (not satisfied with crèche facilities) to Q.3.a

Q.4 Give your main reason for using the crèche:

Q.5 "When did you start using the crèche?"

How many days a week do you use the crèche?

What time does the child go to the crèche?

Q.6 What is your main reason for wanting to use the crèche ?

REASON	Tick Preference
To allow you to go to work / FAS CE scheme / training course	
To allow you to do other things e.g. housework/hobbies	
To help the child to develop learning skills	
To help the child to develop social skills	
To allow the child to socialise and play with other children	
No response/Not Applicable	

Q.8 "If you are not using the crèche, what is your reason for not using it?"

REASON	Tick Preference
Too far from where I live	
Crèche should be open longer hours	
Crèche open too late in the morning/ afternoon	
Other reasons - state	

Q.10 Opinions on what the new crèche should provide:

How many hours would you use the crèche?

What is your preferred starting time?

What is your preferred finishing time?

Would you like your child to stay during lunchtime?

Would you prefer a lunch to be provided if your child stays during lunchtime?

Would you be willing to partake on Parents' Committee ?

The crèche will need to close for one month during the year, what is your preferred month of closure?

APPENDIX 4

The Newmarket-on-Fergus Community Group Survey - Sample Questionnaire.

1. Tick the box in the following list to describe your relationship to the child:

MOTHER	FATHER	GUARDIAN
OTHER (Please specify):		

2. Do you live in local authority housing?

3. How many children do you have?

4. How old are they?

CHILD 1	Age:	CHILD 6	Age:
CHILD 2	Age:	CHILD 7	Age:
CHILD 3	Age:	CHILD 8	Age:
CHILD 4	Age:	CHILD 9	Age:
CHILD 5	Age:	CHILD 10	Age:

5. Does anyone else help you with the care of your child on a regular basis (more than once a week):

	Please tick	Pre-school	After-school
Child's Relative other than Mother/Father			
Neighbour			
Workplace crèche/Nursery			
Private crèche/Nursery			
Mother & Child Group			
Playgroup			
Childminder in the Childminder's Home			
Childminder in the Child's Home (or Au Pair)			
Other (Please specify)			

6. How much on average per week do you pay for childminding facilities?

7. Are you happy with your current arrangements for childminding? If NO, why not?

8. Would you use a Community crèche for your child/children? If NO, why not?

If NO because you feel that your child is too young this year to attend the crèche, would you use the crèche in 1998? _____ (tick)
or in 1999? _____ (tick)

IF YOU ANSWERED NO TO Q.8, NOW PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 16

IF YOU ANSWERED YES, PLEASE ANSWER THE REMAINING QUESTIONS.

	Pre-school	After-school
9. Would you use the crèche for pre-school or After-school ?		
10. How many days would you use the crèche?		
11. How many of your children would you bring to the crèche?		
12. What time would you prefer your child/children to start at the crèche?		
13. What time would you prefer your child/children to finish at the crèche ?		
14. What activities would you prefer your child to do at the crèche? (List suggested)		
15. What is your MAIN REASON for wanting to use the crèche? (List suggested)		

16. Tick the box in the following list to describe the EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the MOTHER (or Guardian) of the child: *(List suggested)*
If 'UNEMPLOYED', will you (MOTHER) be seeking part-time or full-time work?
17. Tick the box in the following list to describe the EMPLOYMENT STATUS of the FATHER (or Guardian) of the child: *(List suggested)*
If 'UNEMPLOYED', will you (FATHER) be seeking part-time or full-time work?
18. Would you be interested in attending any training or educational courses?
If YES, please give details

LIST OF CONTACTS

Numerous personnel and organisations were contacted in the course of this research. Contacts were made both at local and national levels. The following is a list of the groups which provided valuable advice and information.

An Comhchoiste Reamhscolaiochta Teo
An Post
Ballyhoura Development Ltd., Co. Limerick.
Ballynanty Community crèche, Limerick
Barnardo's Family Support Project, Limerick
Central Statistics Office, Cork.
Combat Poverty
Commission on the Family
Community Centre, Moyross, Limerick.
Department of Education
Department of Enterprise & Employment
Department of Equality & Law Reform
Department of Health
Department of the Taoiseach
Eilis Hennessy, UCD
Employment Equality Agency
FAS
Clarecare, Ennis.
IBEC
ICTU
IPPA
Limerick City and County Enterprise Boards
Limerick Corporation
Limerick Employment Services
Limerick VEC
Manufacturing companies in the Shannon region.
Mel Cousins, Researcher
Mid Western Health Board
National Schools in Limerick City and County.
Noirin Hayes, DIT
Nuala Keher, Open University, Galway.
Obair, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co.Clare.
Paul Partnership, Limerick
Rural Day Care Project, Enniskillen
SFADCO
SIPTU
Southill Community Crèche, Limerick
Student Co-operative Employment Office, University of Limerick
UK Childcare Information Services
Waterford Childcare Project
West Link Resources
Women's Studies, UCG.

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