

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment February 2008

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Introduction

Southwark children's services have spent the last 6 months listening at length to over 1000 parents, and over 100 childcare providers, who have helped us to understand their differing childcare needs.

The duty to secure sufficient childcare

The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a new duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by them) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area in order to enable them to work or undertake education or training leading to work. It also gives them a related duty to secure free early learning provision for pre-school children of a prescribed age.

In preparation for this duty, a detailed assessment of the supply, and demand for, childcare in Southwark has been undertaken. This assessment is a measurement of the nature and extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare within each local area. The assessment is a necessary step towards securing sufficient provision, enabling local authorities to identify gaps and establish plans to meet the needs of parents. It will be subject to annual reviews with a new assessment undertaken on a three year basis.

The role of the local authority is to facilitate the childcare market so that provision meets the needs of parents, carers, children and young people. The authority will also support childcare providers to develop their workforce and promote their services.

What are the assessment steps?

Our approach to the assessment involved the following methods:

- A review of the current supply of childcare through analysing: official data, data held by Southwark's children's information service, the Early Years Census and Minimum Free Entitlement data and a survey of childcare providers across the borough
- A review of the current demand of childcare through: parents' household survey, major survey of Southwark pupils, interviews with parents, consultation with local employers and key stakeholders in the borough such as the Jobcentre Plus
- A review of the context of local childcare services in the borough to include an analysis of official data on socio-economic profiling underpinned by official national and local statistics.

The process of producing the assessment has been overseen by a Local Authority steering group. The Surestart Parent Participation Forum, which has previously received training in social survey methods, was involved over a number of sessions in designing the questionnaires used.

The National Centre for Social Research has provided substantial assistance in the Latent Class Analysis of parental attitudes to childcare.

Finally, thanks are due to all the parents who have given up their time to complete questionnaires, to colleagues within Southwark and in other Authorities who have provided assistance.

Summary of key findings

Parents' views

Satisfaction with childcare is generally quite high. As parents' perception of choice over their childcare increases, so does their satisfaction with the childcare.

Parents take different approaches to choosing childcare: for example, some will focus on the staff; while others will look more to Ofsted reports and the activities offered.

Cost and location of childcare are the most frequent choice-limiting factors; quality was least frequently cited. Although these reasons vary with the age of the child, the overall pattern is the same at all ages.

Use of informal childcare includes caring by family members (other than the respondent and their partner, if applicable), friends and babysitters. An issue of concern for the Local Authority is the prevalence of unregistered childminding, particularly for older children. Even among those parents who do require childcare, family members are the most popular choice.

Children with a disability or special need were more likely to be cared for by family or friends (39% compared with 22% for children with no disability), and correspondingly less likely to use formal childcare. A number of parents expressed their concerns that childcare settings would be able to care appropriately for the special needs of their child.

A significant number of parents do not want to use childcare.

A high number of parents reported that they had flexibility at work. However inflexibility of employers is seen as a big factor by many parents, when considering whether to work, much more so than a lack of childcare.

Children's views

Children and young people prefer to participate in sports and other activity clubs rather than remain in the childminder's home (both at primary and secondary age). Attendance at homework and study clubs increases as children reach the end of each school phase. Attendance at youth clubs goes from 46% going at least once a year at primary level, to 61% at secondary level.

Provider views

Overall childminders tend to agree that there is sufficient childcare in their area: 76% agree 'there is a good mix'; 59% agree 'there is sufficient childcare locally'; and only 27% agree that 'there is too much childcare locally'. Amongst other childcare providers (day nurseries, pre-schools and out of school clubs) only half agree that there is enough childcare and that parents have a reasonable range of options, half of settings sometimes find it difficult to fill vacancies, and only one-quarter agree that 'most parents can afford childcare'.

78% of childminders agree or strongly agree that their business is sustainable. All other childcare providers are even more positive, with 38% planning to increase the number of places they offer, by an average of 21 places each. None expect to reduce in size or close completely.

The main demand is for additional care and activities that operate every school holiday for children aged five to 14 years.

London Borough of Southwark

Located on the south side of the Thames, immediately opposite the cities of London and Westminster, Southwark has undergone massive change in recent years to become one of the most vibrant, exciting and culturally diverse areas of London. Although Southwark is described as an “inner city” borough it covers areas of very diverse housing type, which have driven the changing demographic profile. The borough includes areas of “leafy suburbia” as well as fashionable riverside flats and converted Victorian terraces. In general there is a mix of increasingly expensive private sector housing mingled with large estates of social rented accommodation, often home to disadvantaged households.

Many parts of the borough have been transformed over the last few years. The scale of change has been felt in many places such as Peckham and north Southwark, the latter being repositioned as a vibrant part of central London, opening up new opportunities for residents and businesses. However the problems of poverty and low income remain very real for many people all over the borough. Southwark is the 12th most deprived borough in England and Wales (rank of average score, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004).

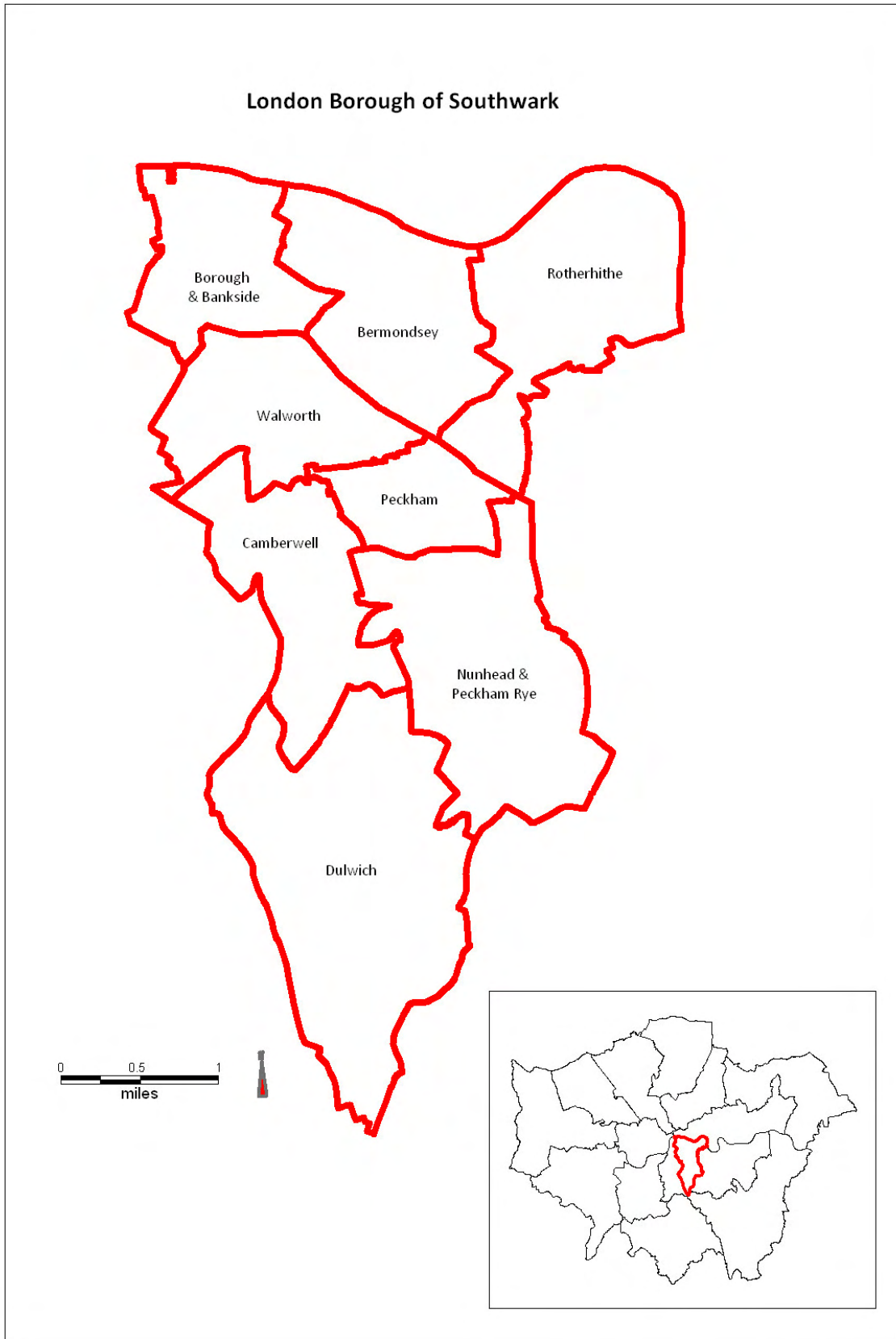
Southwark had an estimated population of 253,800 (Office of National Statistics 2003 mid-year estimate). The population is expected to rise to 285,000 by 2011. Southwark’s population on average is relatively young (five years younger than England as a whole), with one in five of the total population being below the age of 15 years. Over the past decade there has been an increase in 30 to 44 year olds and a decrease in those aged 65 to 84 years (Office of National Statistics, 2003).

Some communities in Southwark still suffer from high levels of deprivation characterised by high levels of unemployment, benefit dependency, ill health and crime. 15 of Southwark’s wards, 60 per cent in total, are in the 10 per cent most deprived wards nationally. Unemployment is above the London average, and five times that for Black and Minority Ethnic communities. 26,525 people in Southwark claim income support (Office for National Statistics 2003). For those in work, incomes are lower than the national average. The take-up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit in Southwark has increased by 3% from 24% to 27%. The England average has risen 2% from 14% to 16%. Southwark has the highest take-up in the country. See Appendix 1 for maps showing the number of families claiming child benefit (map 5), relative child population at different ages (map 6), job seekers (map 7) and families out of work (map 8) in Southwark.

More than 40 per cent of the borough is covered by a current or planned regeneration area. Over the next ten years between £2-3 bn will be invested in regeneration in the borough, including the Elephant and Castle, Canada Water and Bermondsey Spa.

There are many complex challenges facing Southwark, but our diversity presents exciting opportunities for the future. Through continuing commitment to partnership working and innovative partnership activity we are successfully moving towards our vision of **making Southwark a better place to live, to learn, to work and to have fun.**

The Community Council areas of Southwark



Map 1 – Southwark Community Councils

Overview of current supply

Childcare

As of December 2007, Southwark has 759 childcare settings offering 9145 places. There has been a 2.6% annual increase in number of places over the last couple of years, while in England as a whole there has been little change.

Below shows a breakdown of the types of provision available. Please note that the number of places does not equal number of children cared-for, two part-time children may use on place.

	<i>Number of settings</i>	<i>Number of places</i>	<i>Number of settings with vacancies</i>	<i>% of settings with vacancies</i>	<i>Total number of vacancies</i>
Breakfast club	34	1101	11	32%	108
Out of school care	88	3013	16	18%	128
Childminder	438	1579	358	82%	611
Day Nursery	85	3223	76	89%	424
Crèche	11	181	n/a	n/a	n/a
Holiday Scheme ¹	73	3486	n/a	n/a	n/a
Supplementary school	8	229	2	25%	4
Total	759	9145	463	63%	1275

Table 1. Number of childcare settings and vacancies in Southwark Source: Children's information service December 2007

¹ Settings and places as of summer 2007.

Minimum Free Entitlement

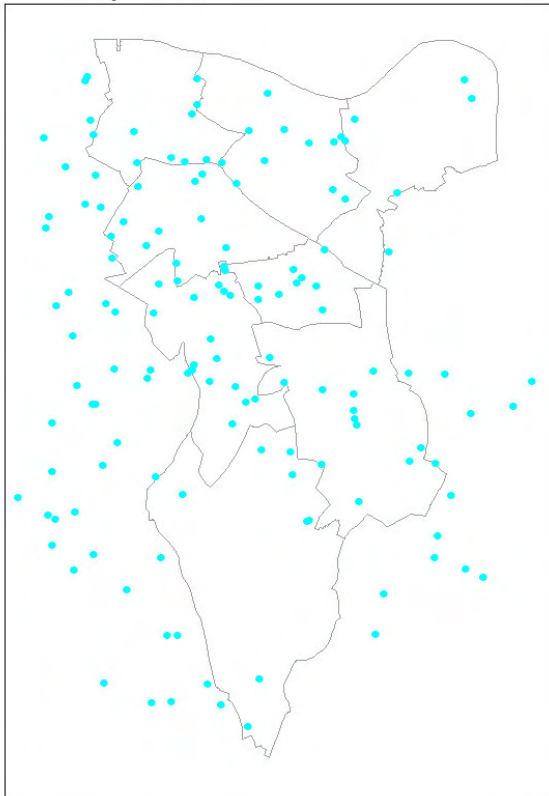
Minimum Free Entitlement is the 12.5 hours/week free early years education to which all three and four year olds are entitled. Details of the children claiming it at private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings and in maintained schools are gathered termly. Overall, 87% of children receive MFE; 67% in schools, and 20% in PVI settings.

These overall rates, and the balance between schools and nurseries vary quite considerably around Southwark: there are much higher take-up rates in Bermondsey, Rotherhithe and Nunhead & Peckham Rye; and in Dulwich almost as many children attend PVI settings as do maintained schools.

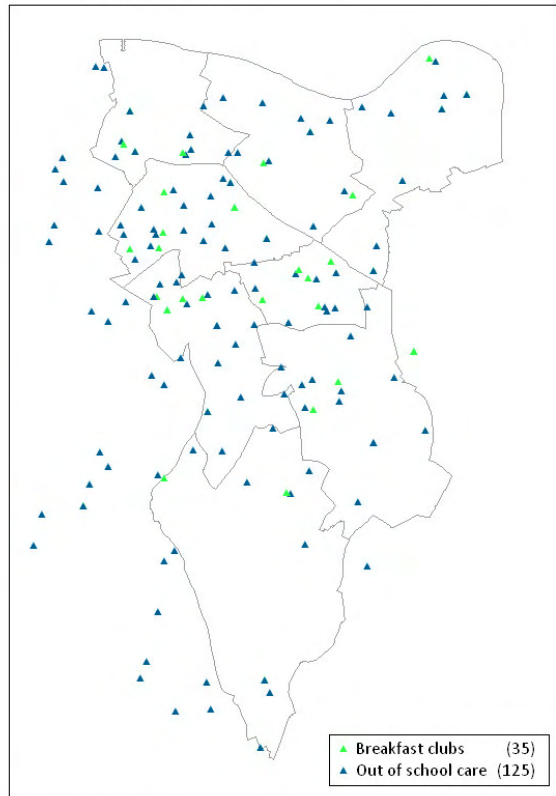
MFE receipt	Autumn 2007								
	MFE in schools	% in schools	MFE in PVI settings	% in PVI settings	Total receiving MFE	Population (SNAP)	% in schools	% in PVI	Total % in provision
Pupil home address Community Council									
Bermondsey	606	86%	99	14%	705	731	83%	14%	96%
Borough & Bankside	338	80%	85	20%	423	512	66%	17%	83%
Camberwell	678	79%	177	21%	855	976	69%	18%	88%
Dulwich	374	52%	352	48%	726	881	42%	40%	82%
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	647	75%	212	25%	859	980	66%	22%	88%
Peckham	515	85%	91	15%	606	755	68%	12%	80%
Rotherhithe	480	87%	70	13%	550	549	87%	13%	100%
Walworth	654	78%	187	22%	841	1048	62%	18%	80%
Total	4292	77%	1273	23%	5565	6432	67%	20%	87%

Table 2. Minimum Free Entitlement take-up. Source: Southwark Early Years MFE collection Autumn

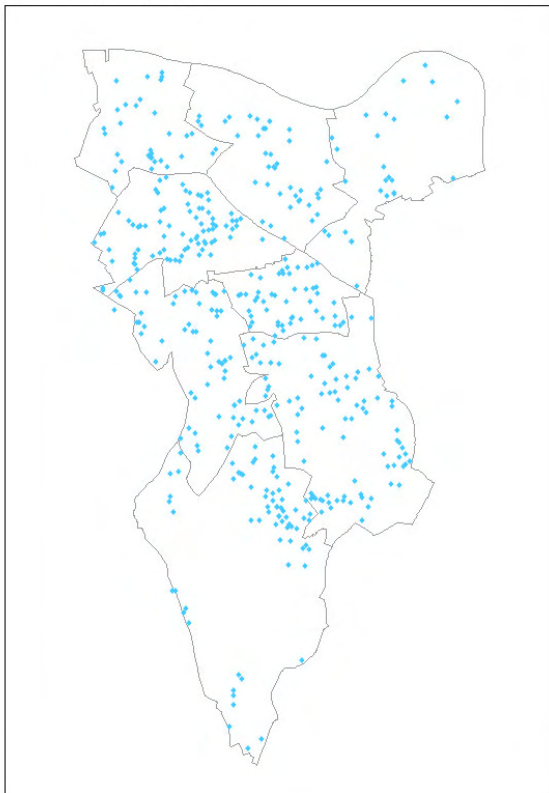
Day Nurseries



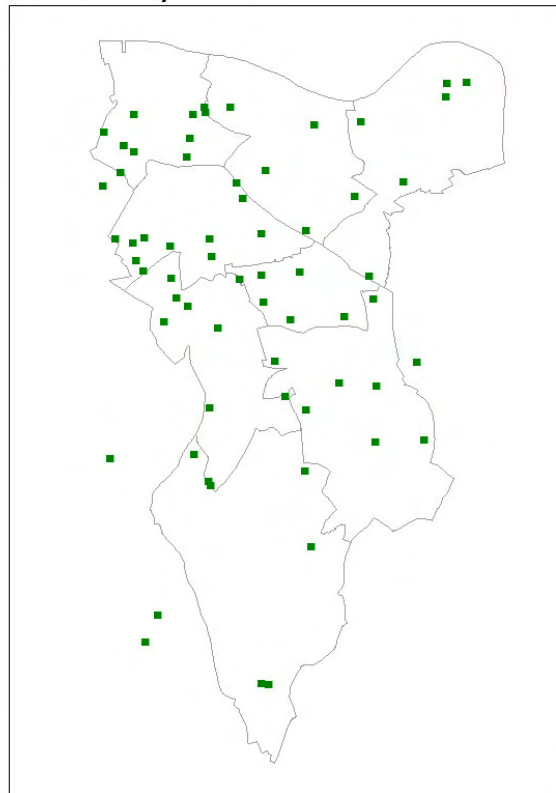
Out of school care



Childminders

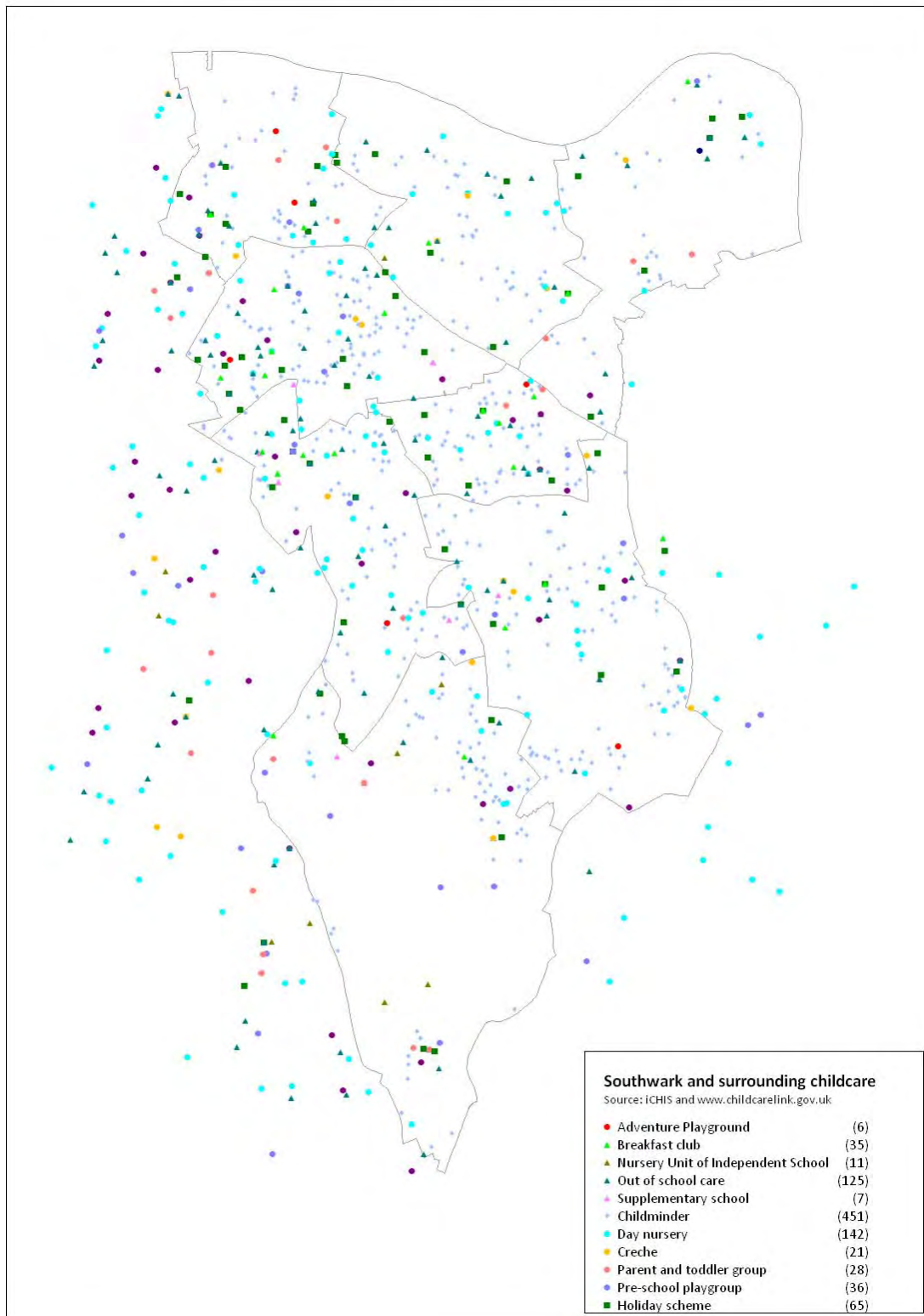


Holiday schemes



Map 2 – Childcare settings in and around Southwark

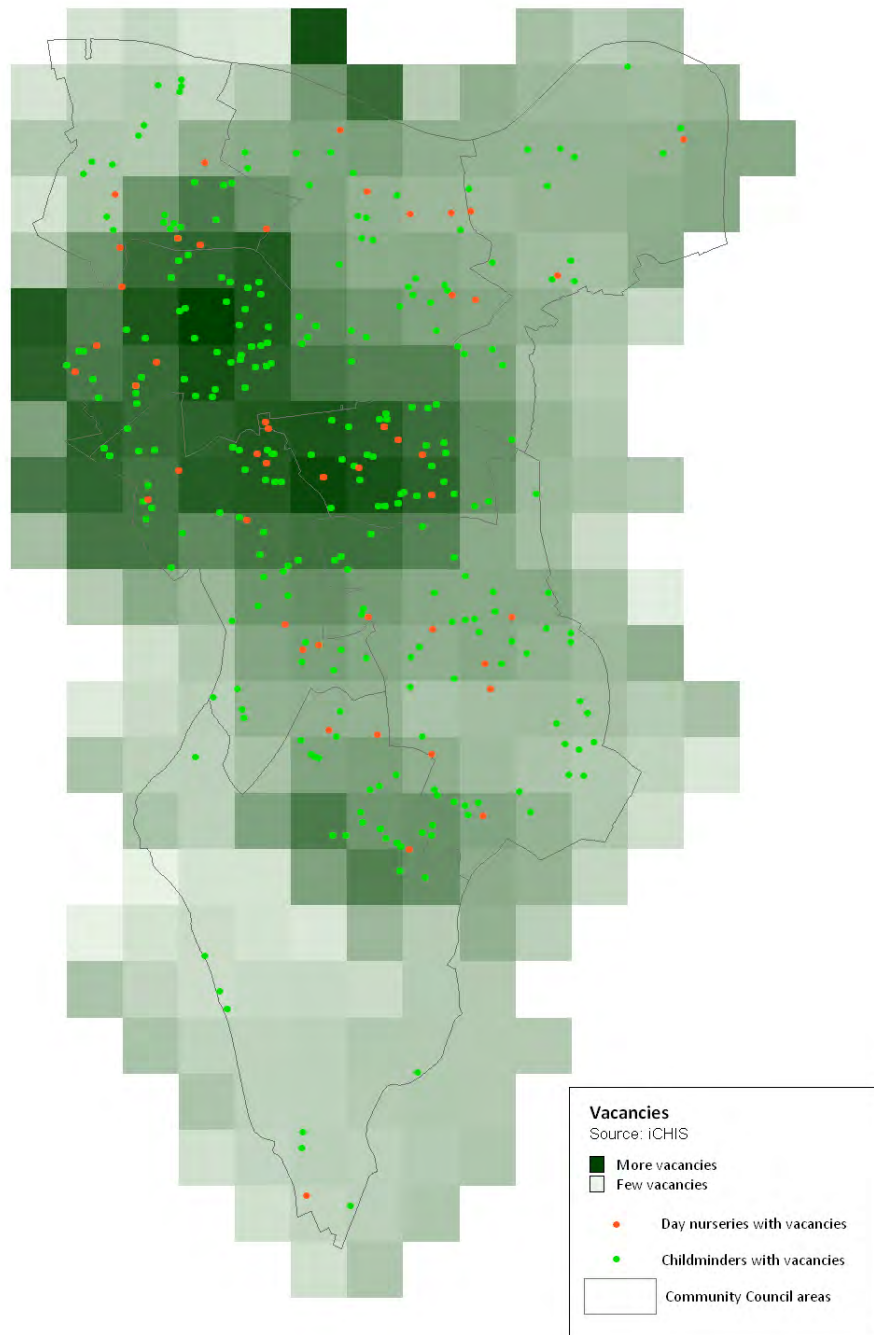
Current childcare supply in and around Southwark



Map 3 – Childcare in and around Southwark combined. Source: iCHIS and www.childcarelink.gov.uk Dec 2007.

Vacancies

Vacancies are indicated by the darker areas in map 4; highest numbers of vacancies are in Walworth and West Peckham. Holiday schemes and crèches have been excluded.



Map 4 – Number of vacancies in different areas of Southwark

Table 1 (page 7) shows current vacancies by type of setting; most day nurseries, childminders, and pre-schools have some.

Quality of childcare

The national measure of quality of childcare available is through Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspection judgements. Chart 1 shows that, for most types of childcare, the quality of provision is lower in Southwark than in England. It should be noted however that the differences are not statistically significant, due to the relatively small number of inspections carried out in Southwark.

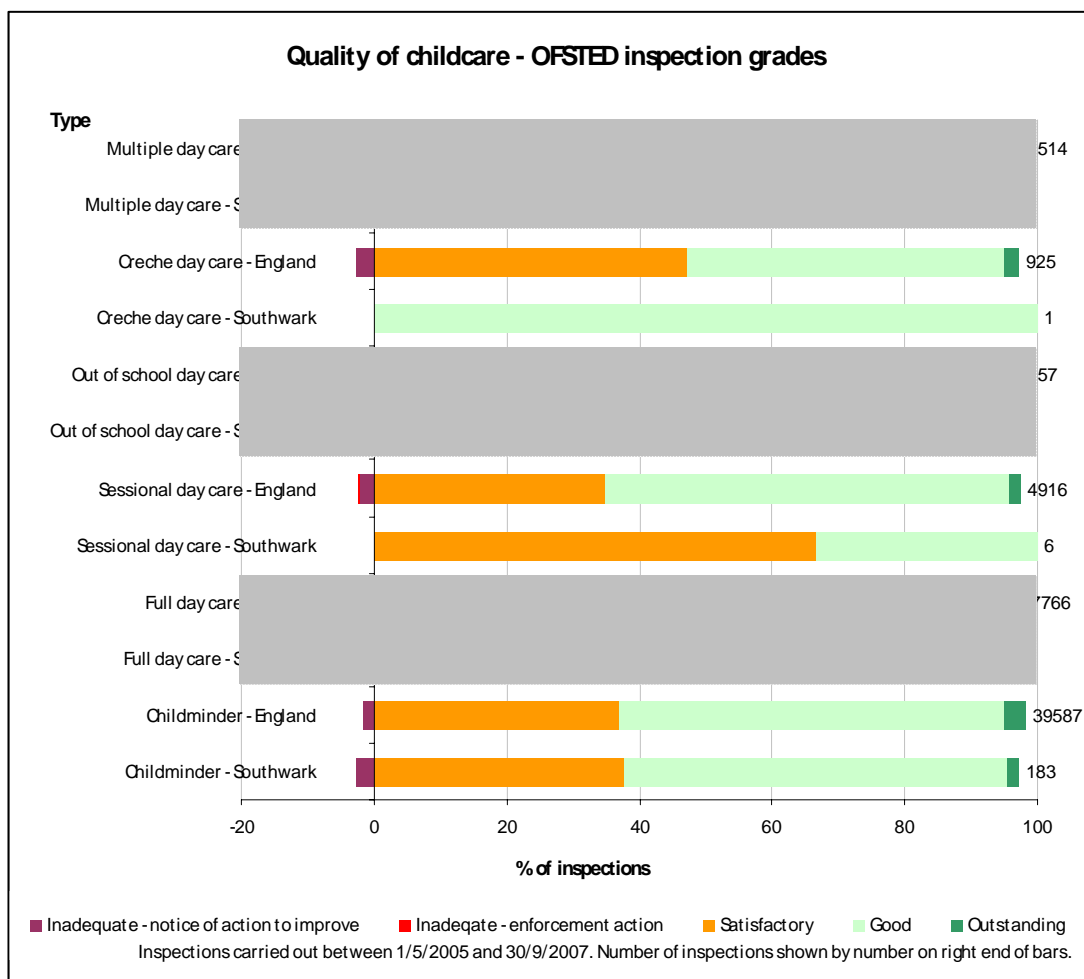


Chart 1. Quality of childcare, Southwark compared to England. Source: Ofsted

Provider opinions

Overall childminders tend to agree that there is sufficient childcare in their area: 76% agree 'there is a good mix'; 59% agree 'there is sufficient childcare locally'; and only 27% agree that 'there is too much childcare locally'. Amongst other childcare providers (day nurseries, pre-schools and out of school clubs) only half agree that there is enough childcare and that parents have a reasonable range of options, half of settings sometimes find it difficult to fill vacancies, and only one-quarter agree that 'most parents can afford childcare'.

78% of childminders agree or strongly agree that their business is sustainable. All other childcare providers are even more positive, with 38% planning to increase the number of places they offer, by an average of 21 places each. None expect to reduce in size or close completely.

Current childcare use

Childcare use varies, with the age of child, from table 3 it is clear that use of:

- families is highest for children aged 0 to four years
- childminders decreases when children reach five years
- after school clubs and other school-based provision increases when the child reaches five years but decreases when they reach 11 years
- use of family and friends is the highest for children aged over 11 years

Childcare used in past month (multiple selections permitted)	Age band of child using childcare		
	Age 0 to 4	Age 5 to 10	Age 11 to 14
family	42.6%	56.7%	36.7%
friends	18.0%	32.0%	23.3%
babysitter	9.8%	7.2%	0.0%
childminder	27.0%	9.3%	10.0%
nursery	44.3%	6.2%	6.7%
playgroup	9.0%	6.2%	3.3%
after school club	7.4%	39.2%	16.7%
youth club	0.0%	4.1%	6.7%
crèche	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%
nanny/au pair	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%
breakfast club	7.4%	18.6%	6.7%
holiday schemes	0.8%	12.4%	6.7%
other school-based acts	3.3%	13.4%	20.0%
other type childcare	2.5%	1.0%	0.0%
not used any childcare	7.4%	4.1%	13.3%

Table 3. Childcare use by age of child. Source: SHPS 2007

There is also substantial variation around Southwark: below shows the proportion of households using childcare in different areas. See Appendix 1 for childcare use by Community Council (chart 17).

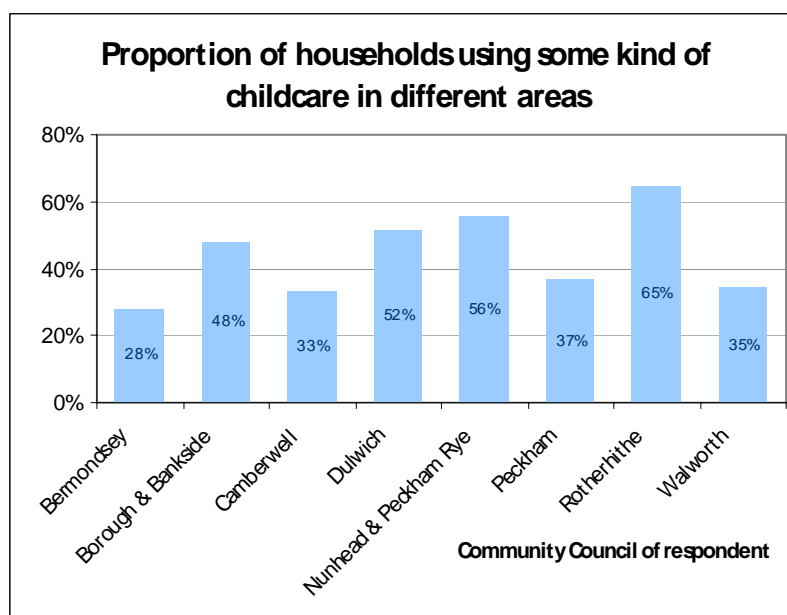


Chart 2. Proportion of childcare by Community Council. Source SHPS 2007

There is no clear pattern of different use of childcare by different ethnic groups. Although Black British, mixed background and Asian families were more likely than average to use formal childcare only, these differences were not found to be statistically significant. Black British and Asian families were less likely to claim the Minimum Free Entitlement in 2007. There were no significant differences in use of childcare by gender or first language.

Informal care

Use of informal childcare includes caring by family members (other than the respondent and their partner, if applicable), friends and babysitters. An issue of concern for the Local Authority is the prevalence of unregistered childminding: tables 4, 5 and 6 suggest that this is more likely to be an issue for slightly older children, and in Peckham and Nunhead & Peckham Rye. The proportion of parents who don't know if their childcare is registered, or don't know what registered means, is quite high at 14% overall. Note the absolute numbers at this stage are relatively low.

Are family, friends, babysitters paid for caring?	Age band of child using childcare (% of people using family, friends or babysitters)			Total
	Age 0 to 4	Age 5 to 10	Age 11 to 14	
Yes	41%	20%	29%	30%
No	59%	80%	71%	70%

Table 4. Is informal care paid for? by age of child. Source: SHPS 2007

Are family, friends, babysitters paid for caring?	Yes
Bermondsey	12%
Borough & Bankside	26%
Camberwell	20%
Dulwich	15%
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	54%
Peckham	43%
Rotherhithe	29%
Walworth	28%
Total	28%

Table 5. Is informal care paid for? by area. Source: SHPS 2007

Is childcare provided by family and friends paid for and registered?	Age band of child using childcare			Total
	Age 0 to 4 %	Age 5 to 10 %	Age 11 to 14 %	%
Yes	62%	15%	20%	43%
No	27%	62%	80%	43%
Don't know	12%	8%	0%	9%
Don't know what registered means	0%	15%	0%	5%
Total (count)	26	13	5	44

Table 6. Is informal paid-for care registered? Source: SHPS 2007

Satisfaction with childcare

In general, levels of satisfaction with various aspects of childcare are quite high, as table 7 shows. Satisfaction levels tend to drop slightly as children get older, with the exception of location.

<i>Satisfaction with childcare</i>	<i>Age band of child using childcare</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Age 0 to 4</i>	<i>Age 5 to 10</i>	<i>Age 11 to 14</i>	
<i>Is childcare available at right times?</i>				
Yes	88%	80%	81%	84%
No	13%	20%	19%	16%
<i>Satisfaction with quality of childcare</i>				
Very satisfied	66%	54%	62%	60%
Fairly satisfied	30%	35%	31%	32%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3%	4%	0%	3%
Fairly dissatisfied	0%	4%	8%	3%
Very dissatisfied	1%	2%	0%	1%
<i>Satisfaction with location of childcare</i>				
Very satisfied	60%	62%	69%	62%
Fairly satisfied	35%	28%	23%	31%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2%	4%	4%	3%
Fairly dissatisfied	3%	3%	4%	3%
Very dissatisfied	1%	2%	0%	1%
<i>Are you satisfied with cost of childcare?</i>				
Yes	53%	56%	42%	53%
No	25%	11%	23%	19%
Not applicable	22%	33%	35%	28%

Table 7. Satisfaction with childcare by age of child. Source: SHPS 2007

Satisfaction levels also vary in different areas of Southwark: worries about quality are higher in Borough & Bankside; and about location and cost in Peckham (see charts 3 to 6).

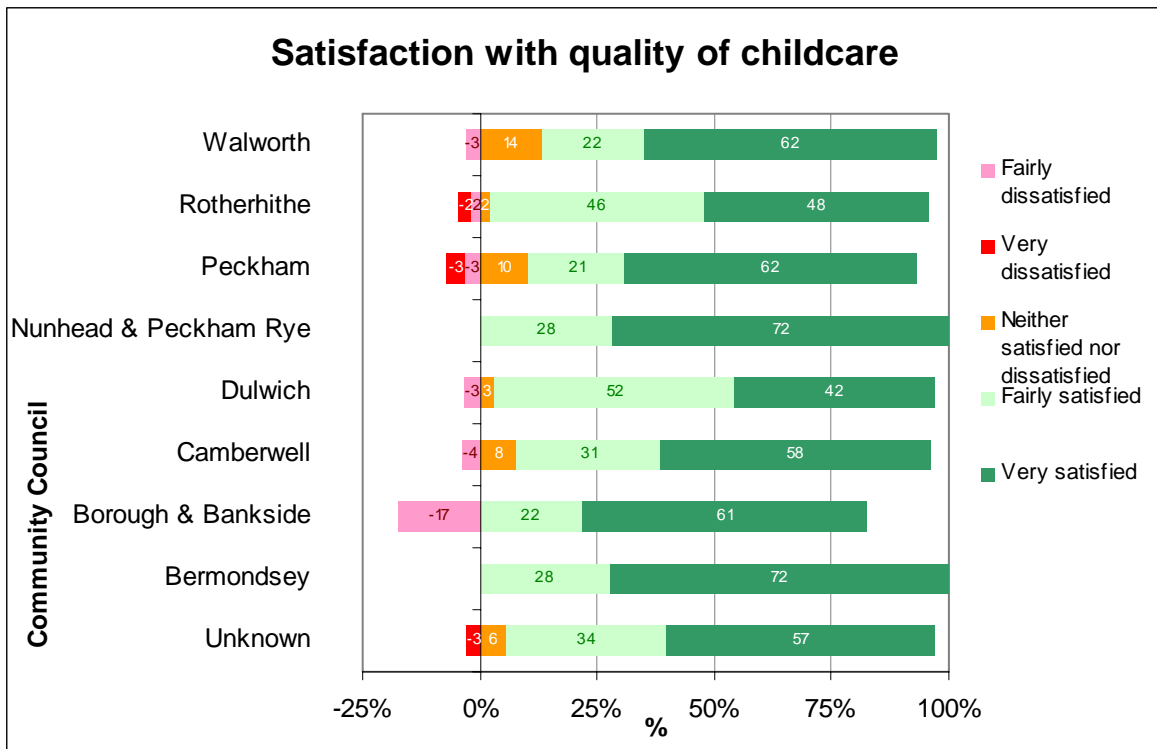


Chart 3. Satisfaction with quality by area. Source: SHPS 2007

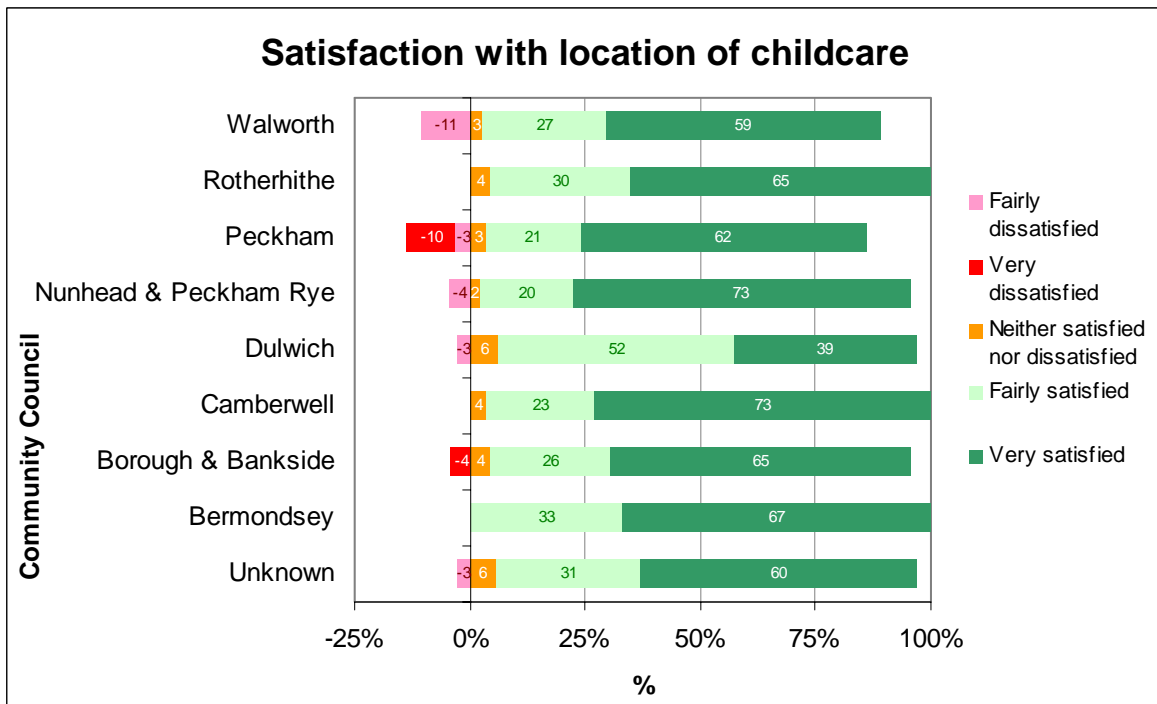


Chart 4. Satisfaction with location by area. Source: SHPS 2007

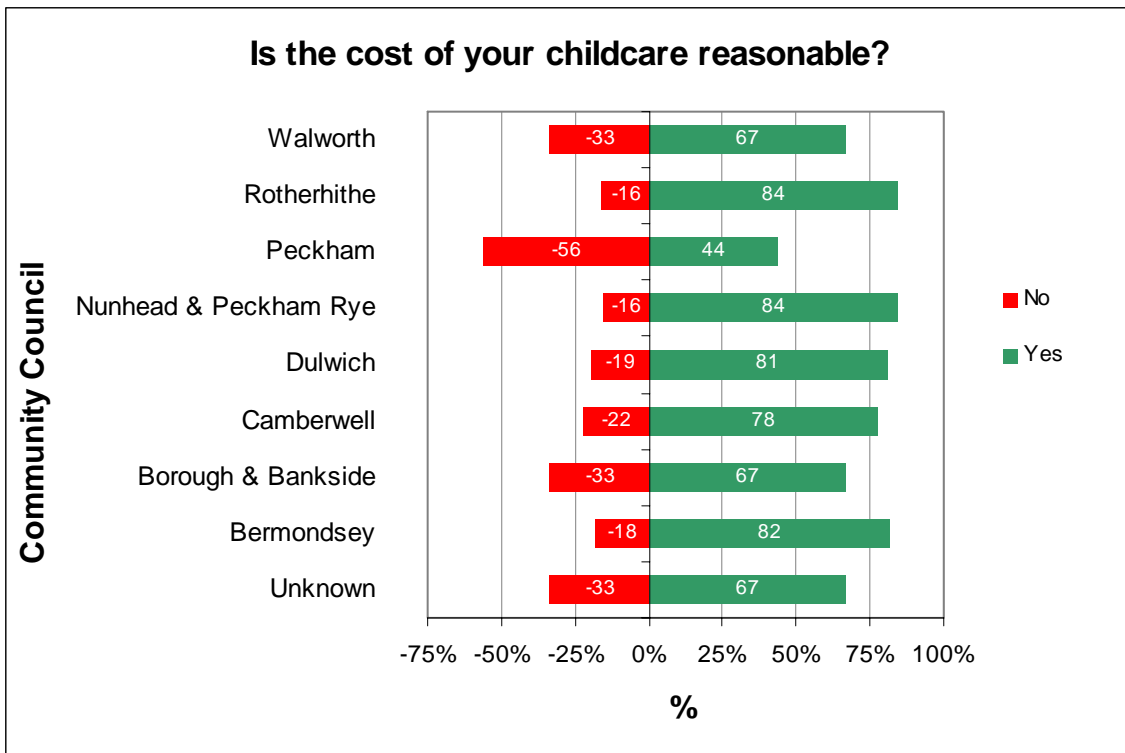


Chart 5. Satisfaction with cost of childcare. Source: SHPS 2007

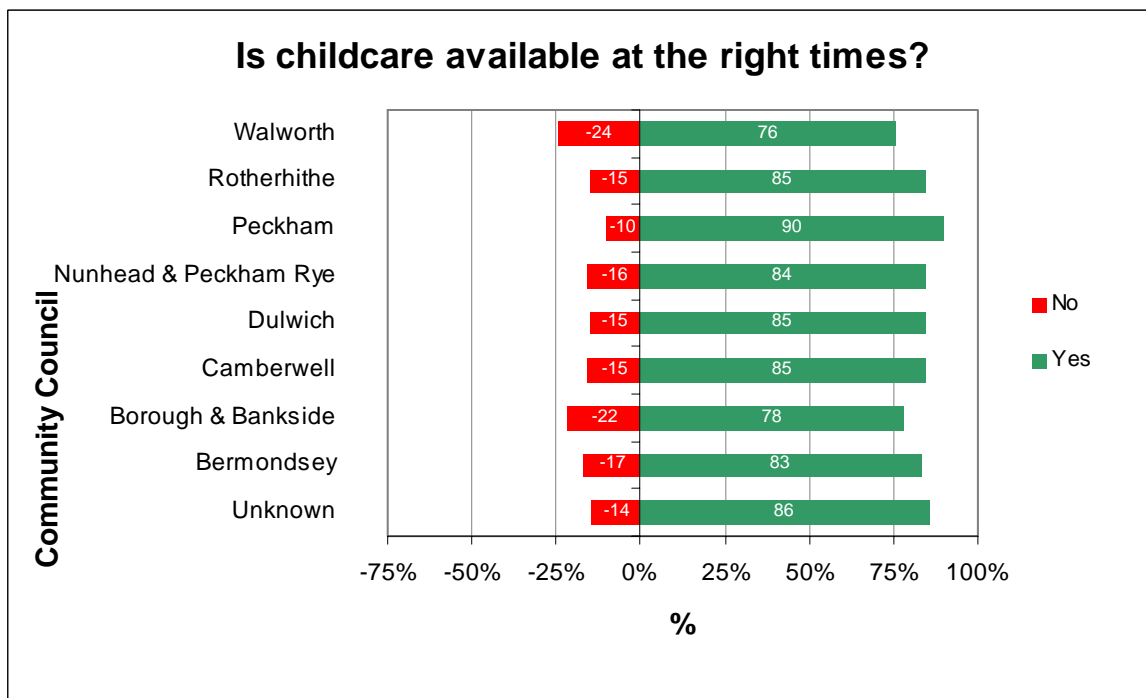


Chart 6. Satisfaction with times childcare is available. Source: SHPS 2007

As parents' perception of choice over their childcare increases, so does their satisfaction with the childcare.

Parent's comments

"Where my child is now is good so I do not mind paying".

"I have had positive experiences with childcare in Southwark. With my first child I used a minder and we had a good relationship. I am happy with the afterschool my second child attends".

"Childcare in Southwark has been a good experience for me and my child, I have had to change three times, to different private nurseries, due to changes in area of work and all the three offered excellent staff and services. My child's current minder after school is one in a million and the journey so far with childcare in Southwark is very good".

"I found the services, as a dad, very helpful".

"You have a very good service that you provide for parents whom are seeking work. One of the main concerns that I have is childcare for my son, especially because of his disability. I am grateful for the support and advice available to me with regards to services".

"When having a child with special needs and wanting childcare, it takes my daughter at least two months to get used to anyone looking after her. This is hard for parents with special needs children".

Choice about childcare

Overall, 40% of parents felt that they had a lot of choice about the childcare they use, and parents of younger children felt they had more choice than those of older children.

<i>Did you feel you had much choice about childcare you used? (column percentages)</i>	<i>Age of child using childcare</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>0 to 4 %</i>	<i>5 to 10 %</i>	<i>11 to 4 %</i>	
Yes a lot	44%	38%	27%	40%
Not very much	37%	35%	46%	37%
No	20%	26%	27%	23%
<i>Why did you feel that you didn't have any or much choice? (multiple selections permitted)</i>				
All the others were too expensive	38%	48%	58%	45%
It was the only place in a convenient location	43%	43%	42%	42%
I found it hard to find somewhere that would accept my child	21%	27%	21%	23%
other	24%	21%	21%	22%
It was the only place I knew about	19%	16%	16%	18%
It was the only place that was of good enough quality	11%	18%	11%	14%
It was the only place with space	21%	7%	0%	12%

Table 8. Choice about childcare and age of child. Source: SHPS 2007

Parent's comments

"During holiday the choice is limited and pricey.....also, the places of playschemes change each holiday. If you want to be part of the community there is nothing prepared to cater for parents at evening who want to participate to meetings (council)".

"School based club would and should open during half term. Registration process is long winded, could be simplified via email and even postal application".

"I believe that many parents with secondary aged children would welcome more diverse providers. Many parents have good relationships with schools and trust in their provision, we also have trusting relationships with Church organisations".

“Afterschool care doesn’t exist in all schools – but is still required whatever the area”.

“I think my family will benefit from more choice of childcare and activities during half terms and other odd days such as inset days and so on. I find whenever my child has the odd day or week off, if I cannot get family to look after her, I’m forced to take annual leave. I try to take a couple of weeks off in the 6 week holiday so this means that the majority of my leave has to be taken when my child has to be off of school”.

“Facilities like breakfast and other afterschool clubs would help most parents in Southwark”.

Cost and location of childcare are the most frequent choice-limiting factors; quality was less frequently cited. Although these reasons vary with the age of the child, the overall pattern is the same at all ages.

There is also very substantial variation in perceptions of choice in different areas (table 9): parents in Rotherhithe, Borough & Bankside and Bermondsey were all more likely to say that they had little or no choice, while 83% of parents in Camberwell said they had a lot of choice. Table 10 shows that the reasons for the lack of choice vary: for example cost was a big factor in Rotherhithe; but knowledge about childcare places was more of a factor in Bermondsey.

<i>Did you feel you had much choice about the childcare you used? (row percentages)</i>	<i>Yes, a lot</i>	<i>Not very much</i>	<i>No</i>
Bermondsey	23%	50%	28%
Borough & Bankside	17%	58%	25%
Camberwell	83%	17%	0%
Dulwich	48%	10%	41%
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	55%	36%	10%
Peckham	40%	15%	45%
Rotherhithe	16%	54%	30%
Walworth	42%	33%	25%

Table 9. Choice about childcare by Community Council area. Source: SHPS 2007

<i>Why did you feel that you didn’t have any or much choice? (% of all respondents in each Community Council. Multiple selections permitted.)</i>	<i>others too expensive</i>	<i>only place good quality</i>	<i>only place in location</i>	<i>only place I knew about</i>	<i>nowhere accepted my child</i>	<i>other</i>
Bermondsey	11%	5%	11%	15%	10%	14%
Borough & Bankside	17%	2%	12%	3%	17%	7%
Camberwell	5%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Dulwich	5%	1%	8%	1%	1%	4%
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	5%	1%	12%	4%	2%	1%
Peckham	9%	4%	16%	4%	2%	4%
Rotherhithe	21%	6%	12%	5%	12%	11%
Walworth	17%	3%	8%	0%	4%	0%

Table 10. Reasons for lack of choice by Community Council area. Source: SHPS 2007

Parent’s comments

“It was difficult to get a nursery place – we have been lucky to get a place at 6 months. Even then the days aren’t those I needed but have had to fit in around what the nursery offered”.

“Lack of nursery places for under two’s”.

“There is not enough good childcare and transport for teenage children, and I will not leave a 12 year old alone at home without an adult to care for, and stimulate the child in learning activities and leisure past-times”.

Reasons not to use childcare

Many parents do not want or need to use childcare; of parents who have not used and do not expect to use childcare, 80% say they don’t want or don’t need to. Extending this to all parents, 46.5% say they do not want or need to use childcare.

Cost is a larger issue in Borough & Bankside, Peckham, and Rotherhithe. Capacity locally is a larger issue in Rotherhithe particularly, and far fewer parents there say they don’t want or need to use childcare. Parents of a child with a disability or special need were more likely to say that they didn’t want to use childcare, or couldn’t find childcare that would accept their child. A number of parents expressed their concerns that childcare settings would be able to care appropriately for the special needs of their child.

<i>What is your attitude towards childcare? (Multiple selections permitted)</i>	<i>Age band of child using childcare</i>			<i>Total</i>
	Age 0 to 4	Age 5 to 10	Age 11 to 14	All ages
Don't want to use childcare	33.8%	19.9%	19.7%	25%
Don't need to use childcare	49.7%	67.3%	67.6%	60%
No childcare available	1.3%	0.6%	2.8%	1%
Too expensive	32.5%	23.7%	14.1%	25%
Not high enough quality	3.3%	5.1%	4.2%	4%
Location	3.3%	2.6%	4.2%	3%
Don't know what's available	6.0%	5.8%	7.0%	6%
Hard to find somewhere that would accept child	8.6%	5.8%	7.0%	7%
Other	5.3%	5.1%	9.9%	6%

Table 11. Attitudes to childcare. Source SHPS 2007

Parent’s comments

“I hope to be self-employed in a few months so that I won’t miss my child going to, and coming from, school”.

“I would appreciate it if the Government would be more lenient with lone parents. We want to be there for our children at all times”.

“I think that mothers should be paid more to look after their children, instead of letting someone else do it for you”.

Work and Childcare

Most parents attending Jobcentre Plus are currently looking after their home and family, but around 20% are currently working or waiting to start a job. Parents of younger children are more likely to be working, parents of older children are more likely to be looking for work. Two-thirds of parents would like to get a job, and 40% would like to start some training or education.

The vast majority (83% overall; 93% for children aged 0 to four years) of parents planning to start work, who are not currently, would need childcare. Three-quarters would like to work for less than 25 hours per week and half of parents would consider working some unsociable hours.

Between around 40% and 50% of parents completing the Jobcentre Plus survey would be prepared to work non-standard hours.

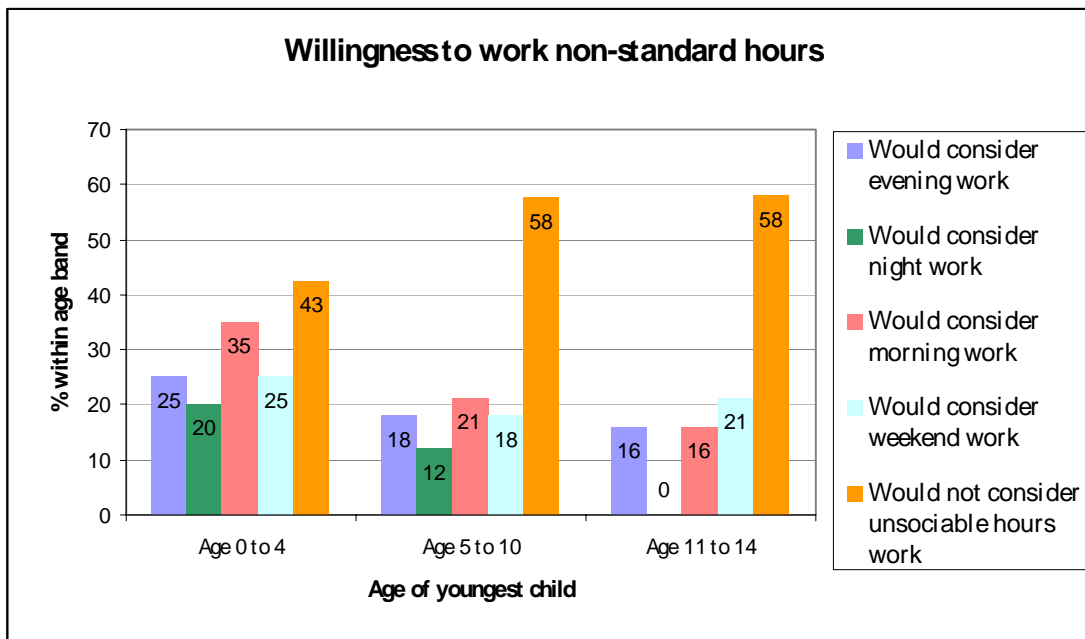


Chart 7. Willingness to work non-standard hours. Source JCP survey 2007

In terms of both non-standard hours and number of hours worked per week, parents of younger children looking for work at Jobcentre Plus seem prepared to work more than parents of older children.

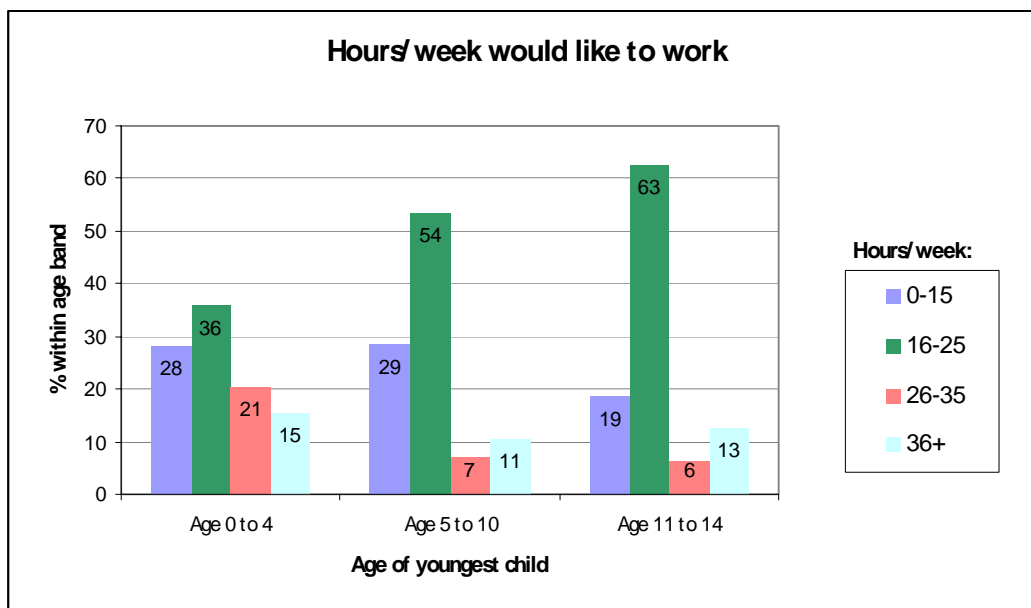


Chart 8. Hours per week would like to work. Source JCP survey 2007

A small number of the parents in the household interview had stopped working, or found it difficult to start, because their employer would not offer sufficient flexibility to balance parenthood and work.

Non-working parents in the household survey were asked to identify factors influencing their decisions about work. The results are summarised in chart 9 below: flexibility at work is a big factor for 66% of parents. Lack of childcare was a big factor for 35%.

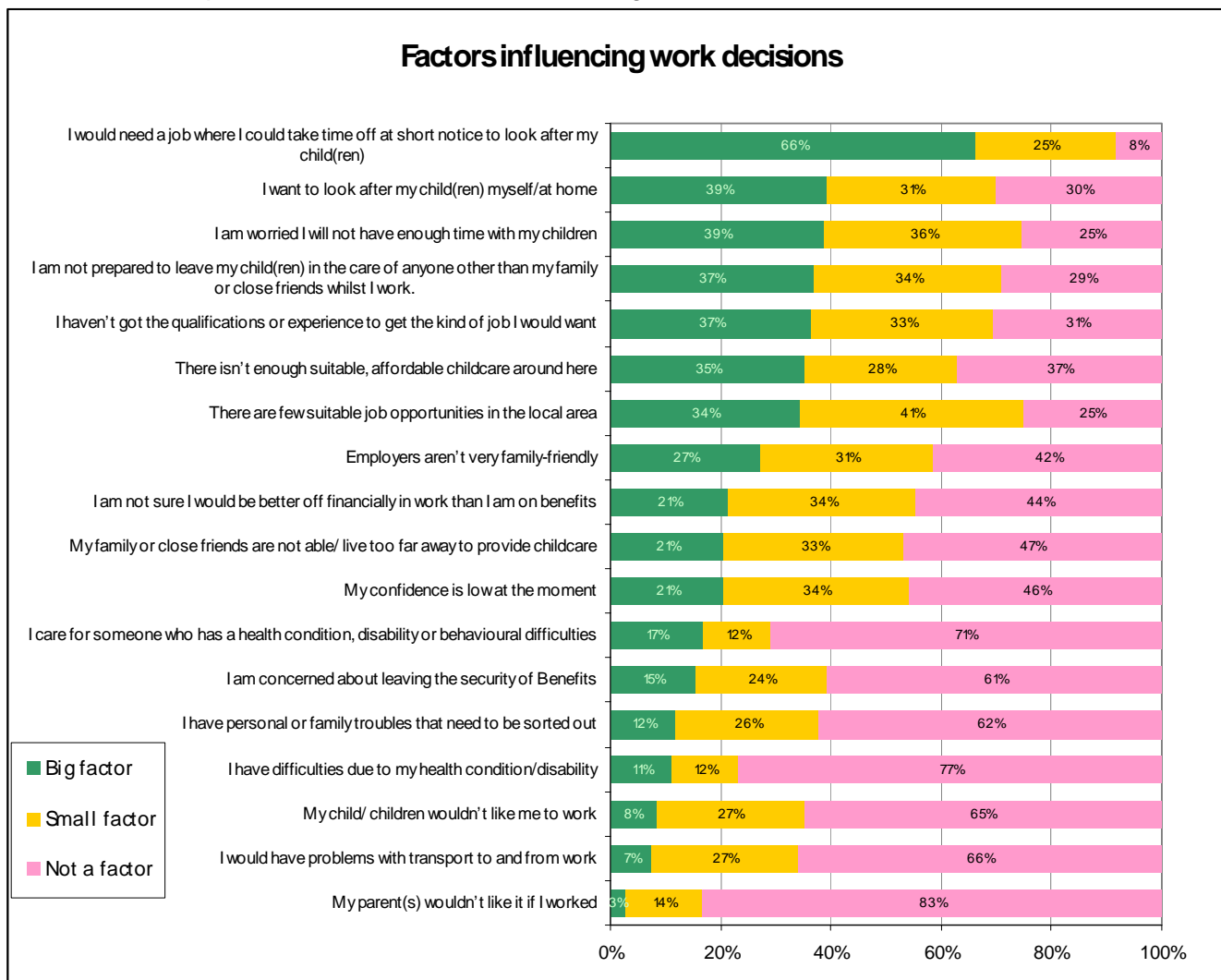


Chart 9. Factors influencing work decisions. Source SHPS 2007

Parent's comments

"I am a single parent with a child aged 15. Although he is a sickle cell sufferer, he can dress and go to school by himself. At the moment I do a part time job in the morning, so I have no problems to work".

"You cannot do a job interview while the children are at playgroup for just 2 hours".

"I would love affordable children nursery that would take my child for a few hours to enable me to look for a job".

Minimum Free Entitlement (MFE)

It is clear from the detailed analysis that there is some confusion in parents' minds about the free entitlement.

Overall, 55% of parents with a child aged three or four years said that they receive free early years education – considerably fewer than are actually funded in Southwark. However, of these, one-fifth do not use any eligible types of childcare; a further 13% use childminders only; Southwark does not fund any childminders to provide MFE. The number of parents saying that they didn't know if they received it, or didn't know what it is, was very low.

Half of childminders know about MFE; only 40% know that childminders could claim it, and only 18% are sure that the children they care for receive MFE elsewhere. Almost two-thirds said that they would be interested in claiming.

Children's views

Children and young people prefer to participate in sports and other activity clubs rather than remain in the childminder's home (both at primary and secondary age). Attendance at homework and study clubs increases as children reach the end of each school phase. Attendance at youth clubs goes from 46% going at least once a year at primary level, to 61% at secondary level.

However there are still substantial proportions of children who might use some of these services, but are currently put off because they can't be bothered or don't like the activities.

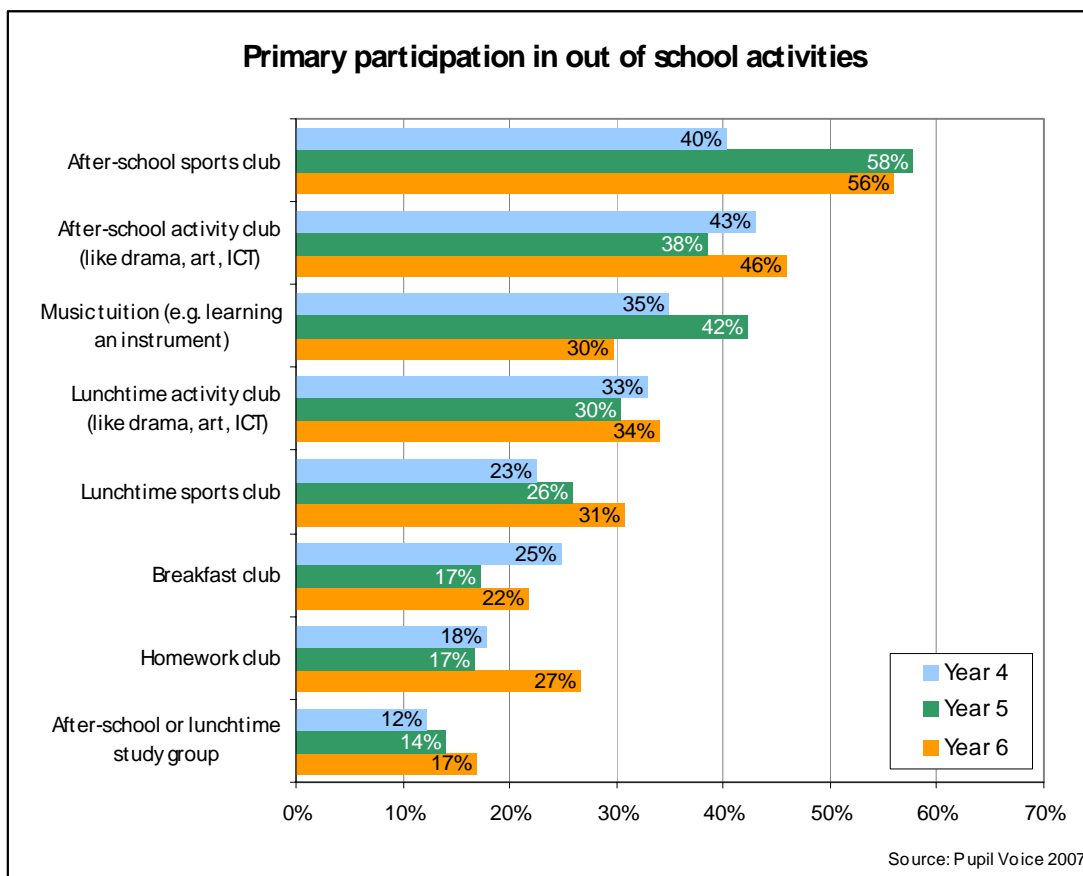


Chart 10. Primary age participation in out of school activities. Source: PV 2007

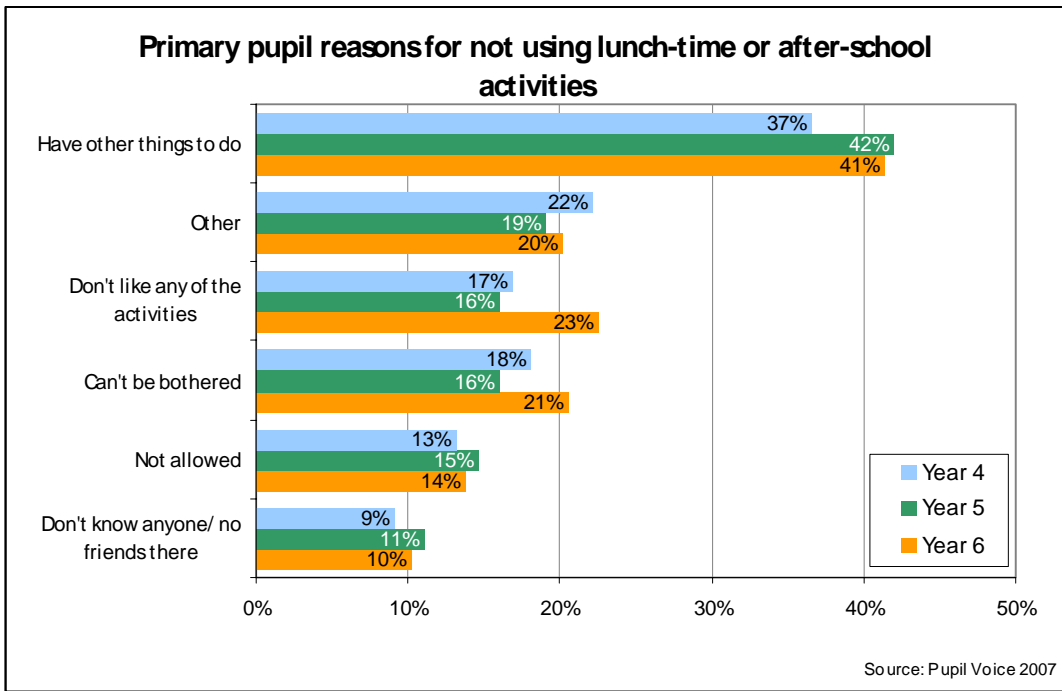


Chart 11. Primary age reasons for not participating in out of school activities. Source: PV 2007

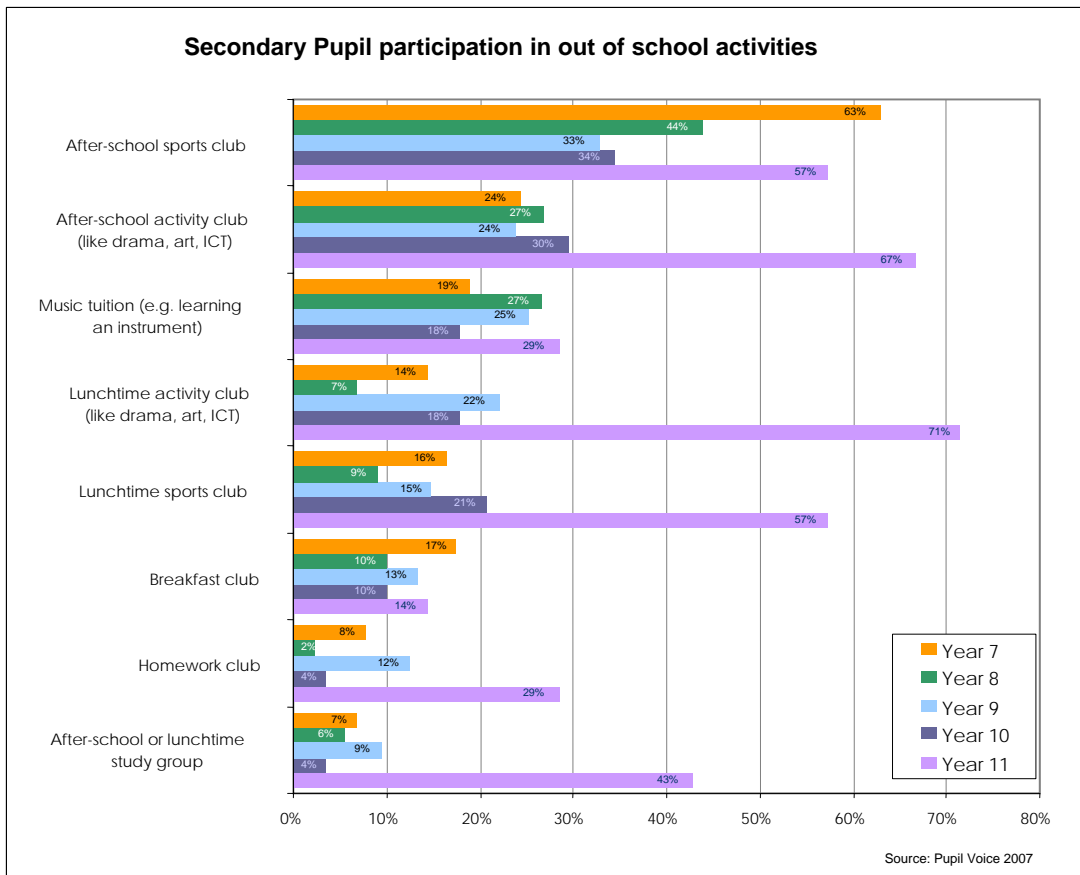


Chart 12. Secondary age participation in out of school activities. Source: PV 2007

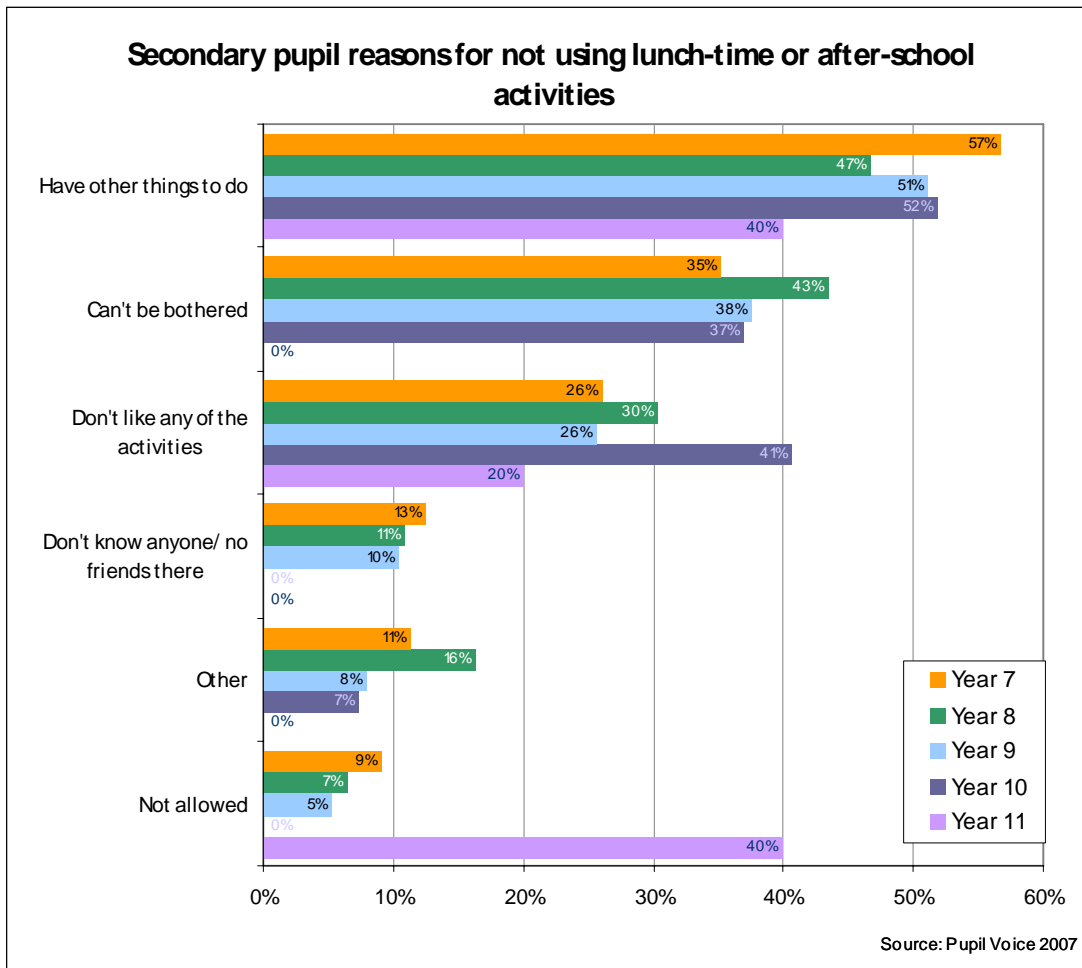


Chart 13. Secondary age reasons for not participating in out of school activities. Source: PV 2007

Childcare use, expected use, and current provision levels

By comparing the current use of childcare to what parents expect to use, we can estimate the changes in different types of childcare around Southwark, illustrated by chart 14.

In the chart, green bars indicate an expected increase within that type of childcare: the left-hand end of the bar indicates current usage, and the right-hand end indicates future expected use. So for example, in Southwark overall use of after school clubs might be expected to increase from around 10% of households currently (left-hand end of the green bar) to around 17% (right-hand end of the same bar).

Red bars indicate an expected decrease in use, from the right-hand end of the bar to the left-hand end. Percentages are the number of households indicating that they currently use or expect to use a particular type of childcare, out of all households with a child aged 0 to 14 years in that area. Note that one household could use more than one type of childcare - on average in Southwark overall parents expect to use 2.5 different types of childcare, up from 1.9 currently. Also note that a registered place with Ofsted may be used by more than one child (household), and this may vary with type of childcare.

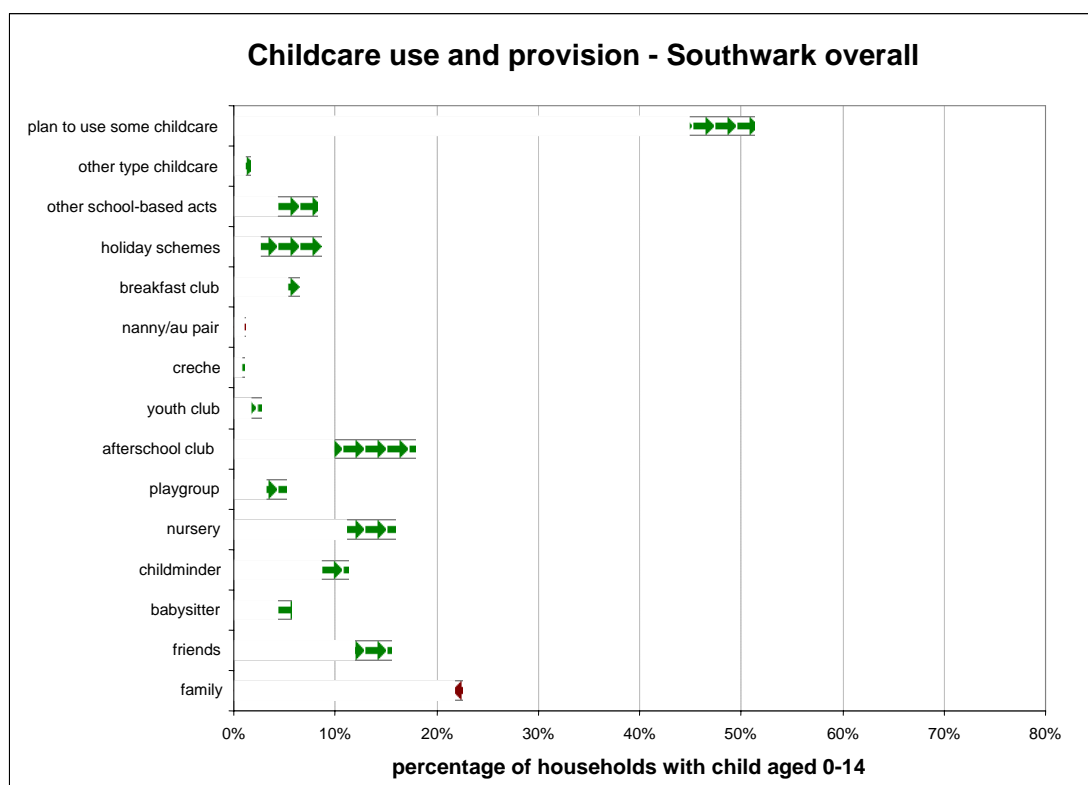


Chart 14. Childcare changing use - overall. Sources SHPS 2007, iCHIS

Looking at smaller age bands we see the changes in childcare type use and expected use by age: use of formal childcare peaking at age two years, various mixes of childcare greatest at age three

to four years, and, as you would expect, out of school clubs (breakfast and afterschool clubs and holiday playschemes) increasing at age five years.

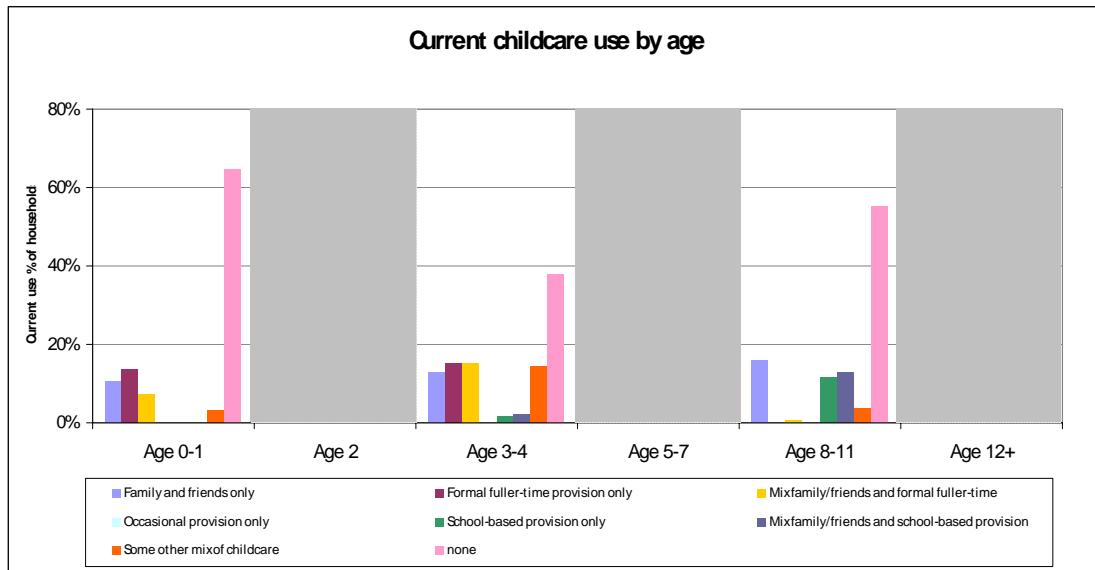


Chart 15. Current childcare use by age of child. Source SHPS 2007

Changes in childcare are based on expected use over the next year or so; but the age of the child is the age now: hence the large increase expected for children aged three to four years.

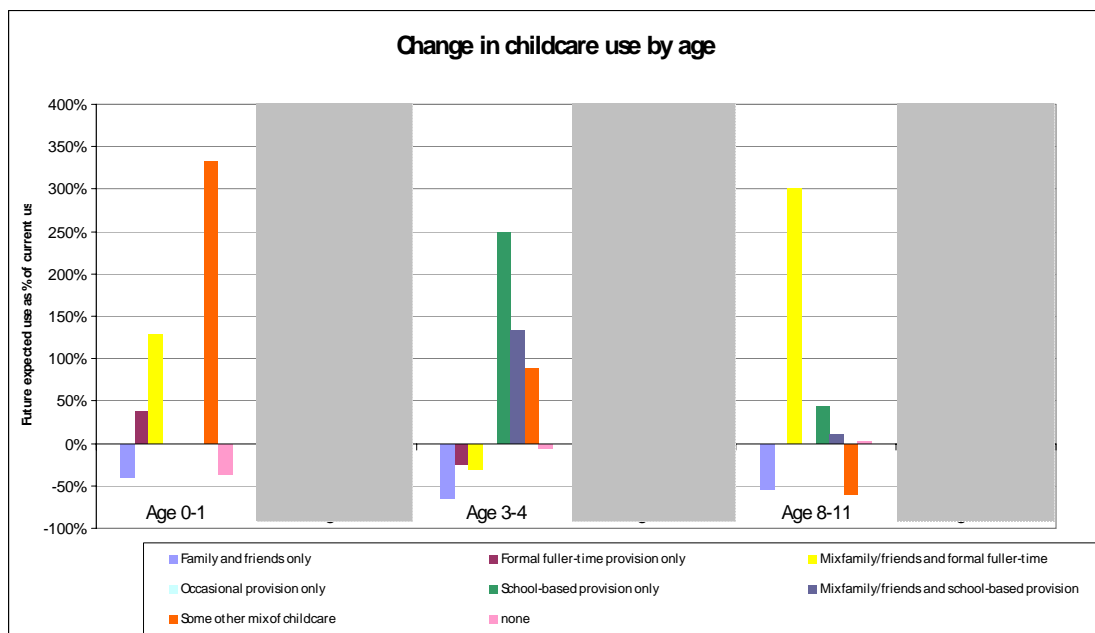


Chart 16. Expected change in childcare use by age of child. Source SHPS 2007

Sources of information about childcare

Friends are the most important source of information about childcare for parents of children of any age.

<i>Sources of childcare information (multiple selections permitted)</i>	<i>Age band of child using childcare</i>			<i>Total</i>
	Age 0 to 4	Age 5 to 10	Age 11 to 14	
Friends	42.6%	45.4%	40.0%	43.0%
School	24.6%	41.2%	26.7%	31.5%
Family	20.5%	28.9%	30.0%	24.7%
Council	19.7%	21.6%	13.3%	19.5%
Web	19.7%	12.4%	6.7%	15.1%
Library	11.5%	13.4%	26.7%	13.9%
Children's information service	15.6%	9.3%	6.7%	12.0%
Health visitor	14.8%	7.2%	3.3%	10.8%
Other	8.2%	7.2%	16.7%	8.8%
Social worker	7.4%	4.1%	0.0%	5.6%
JobCentre Plus	2.5%	3.1%	10.0%	3.6%
Religious establishment	0.8%	5.2%	0.0%	2.4%

Table 12. Information sources about childcare. Source SHPS 2007.

Parent's comments

"Childcare seems very complicated. People like health visitors and the social workers were not a great help and did not know how to help me".

"I think parents need better information from Southwark about how to identify good quality childcare and there should be more emphasis on higher qualification levels".

"More encouragement for young people to gain knowledge in childcare, and more opportunities for young families to get help and child support".

Conclusions

- Most parents within the authority have access to sufficient childcare to enable them to work and/or train.
- Workers must work closely with local groups and schools to carefully ascertain demand before encouraging further supply.
- Extended services need to focus on childcare and activities for children aged five to 14 years for school holidays throughout the year.
- A brokerage service is needed to help parents/carers, wherever possible, find suitable childcare, free early learning, and to work in partnership with childcare providers to help fill their vacancies.
- Throughout the authority as a whole there is sufficient provision for all children eligible to receive early learning.

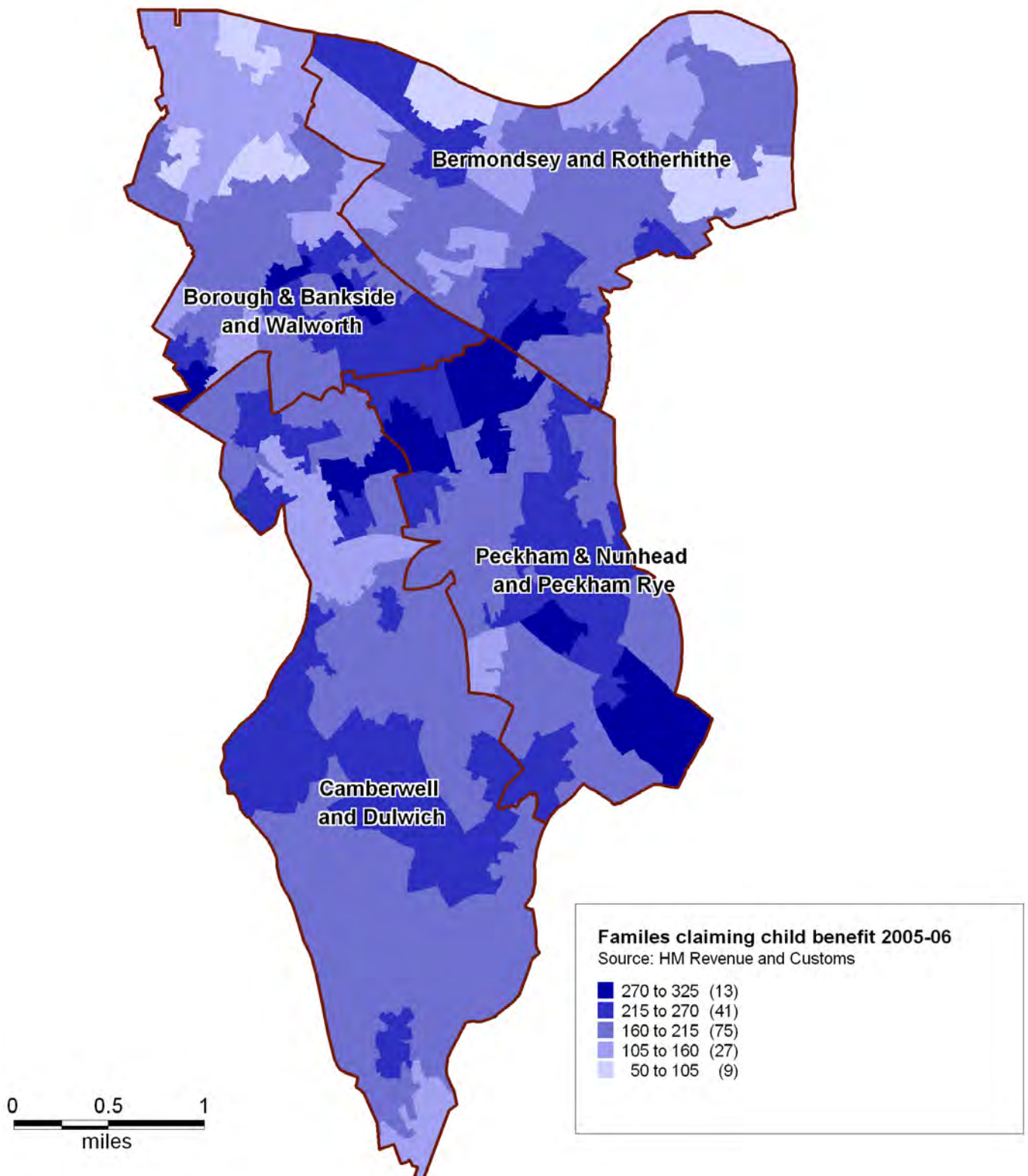
Other factors to be taken into account in meeting childcare needs

The high cost of childcare, afforded more easily by some than others, is an issue unlikely to be resolved in the near future. Remembering that provision must be sustainable, creative solutions are required in areas where there is only limited demand. Resources in area of over supply may require some redirection.

The Government will be increasing the length of the free early learning session for three and four year olds, as well as permitting more flexibility in its use. The increased offer may inadvertently result in a decrease in the number of places available. Some providers have time constraints which mean they are unable to operate for more than five hours and can therefore only accommodate one x 3 hour session per day instead of two x two ½ hour sessions.

The childcare sufficiency assessment will be subject to annual reviews with a new assessment undertaken every three years. In order to ensure that we maintain our knowledge of parents needs the involvement of children's centres and schools in collecting supported questionnaires needs to be maximised, and this will also ensure the continued targeting of individuals and groups for this purpose. This can be achieved through a process of capacity building, training and involvement in the whole process of the sufficiency assessment.

Appendix 1: Maps and charts



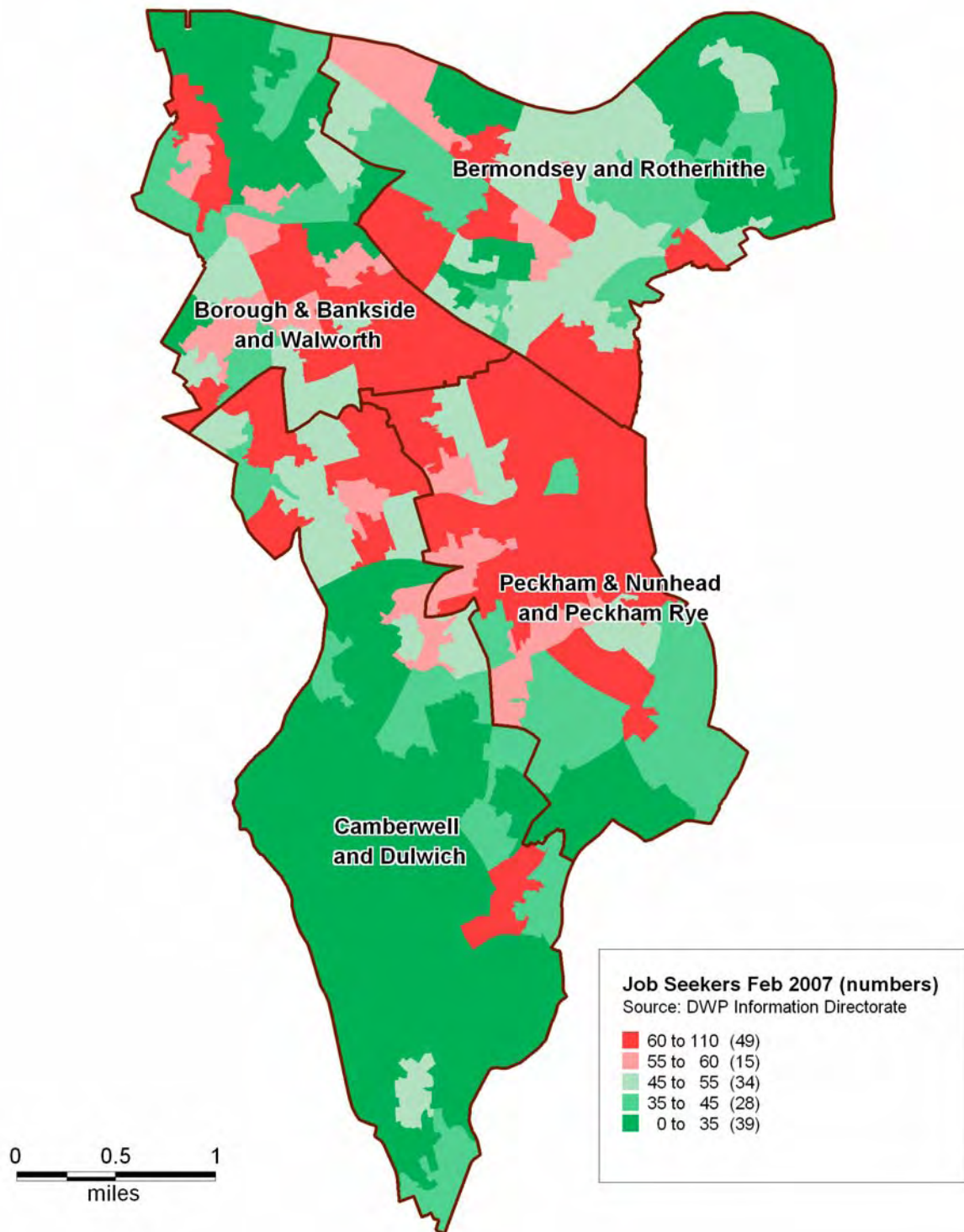
Map 5 – Number of families (not children) claiming child benefit



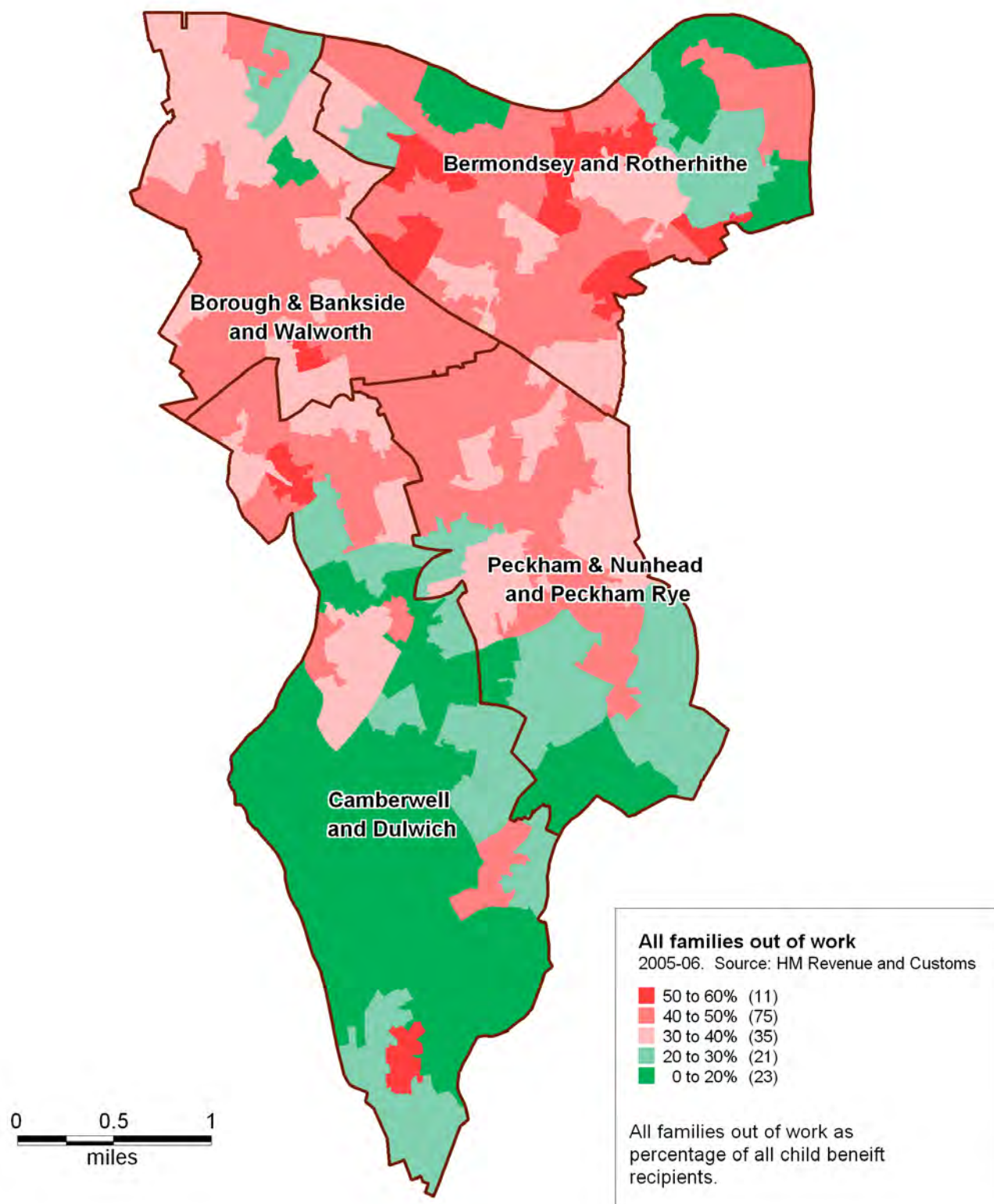
Childcare population derived from SNAP project, Southwark Analytical hub.
 Population data derived from combined administrative datasets 2006.

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Map 6. Relative child population at different ages. Source: SNAP



Map 7 – Job Seekers in Southwark



Map 8 - Families out of work

Use of childcare in different areas

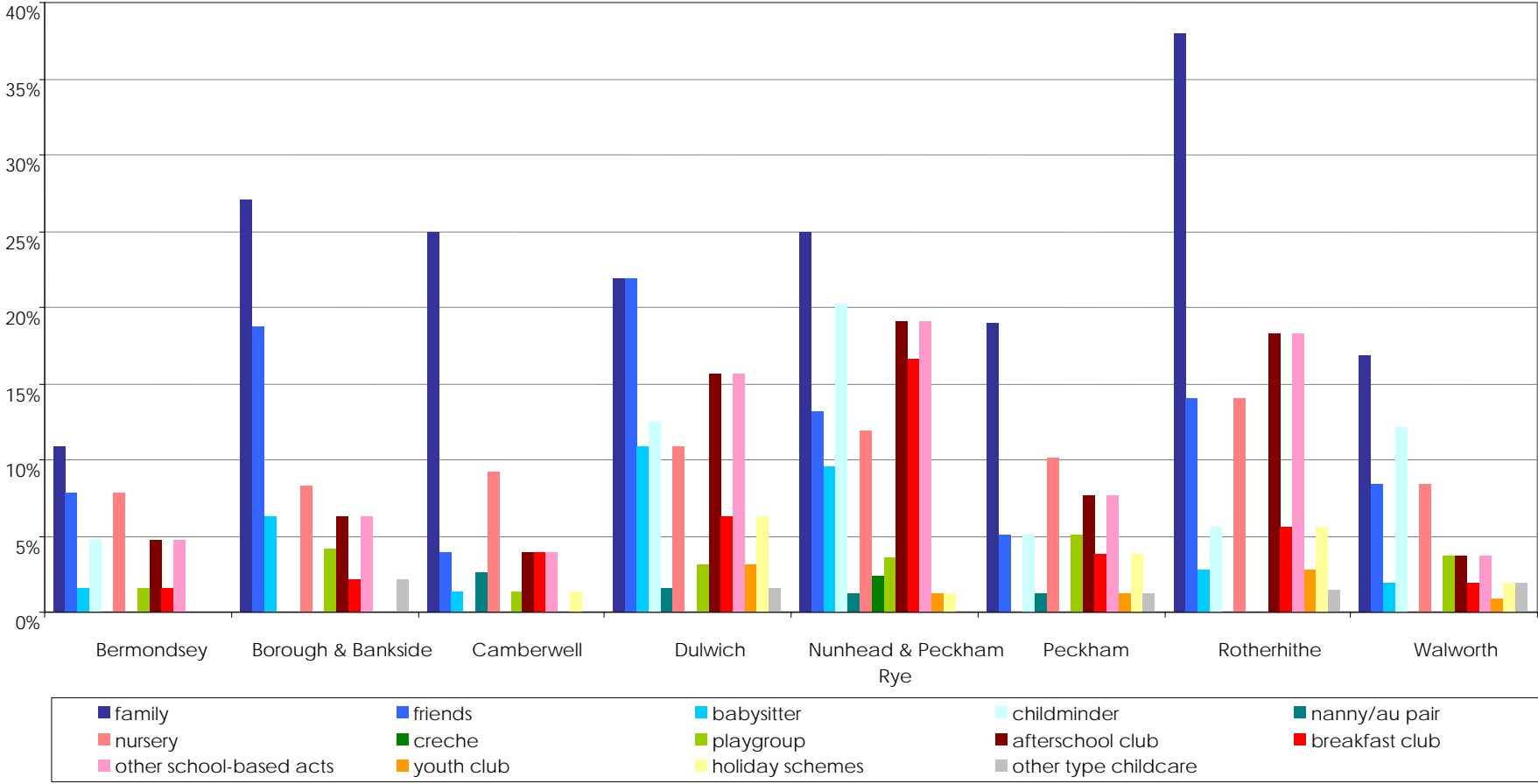


Chart 17. Childcare use by Community Council. Source SHPS 2007