

Early Learning and Childcare Shetland



Parent / Carer Consultation Survey 2021



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Introduction

This report presents the findings from a Shetland-wide survey on childcare services, which aimed to gather the views of parents/carers in Shetland about the current and future delivery of statutory early learning and childcare (ELC), as well as non-statutory school-aged childcare services.

The survey was open to parents/carers in Shetland who has a child that receives a funded early learning and childcare placement or/and a child that is of school-age. The survey was promoted via the Shetland Islands Council social media pages (Facebook and Twitter) as well as having an ad placement in the Shetland News online paper. The survey was open for a total of 4 weeks from Wednesday 17th November until Wednesday 15th December and received a total of 368 responses, with section A (funded ELC questions) receiving 119 responses and Section B (school-aged childcare questions) receiving 316 responses.

The survey was split into two sections:

1. Section A focused specifically on funded early learning and childcare, how parents/carers view the increase of 1140 funded hours, as well as the potential need for any additional childcare.
2. Section B centred around school-aged childcare. This section covered current school-aged childcare in Shetland, and aimed to assesses whether provision meets the needs of parents/carers, and aims to consider where services may need to be developed in the future.

The findings from this survey will be used to support decision making around the service delivery model for statutory early learning and childcare in Shetland and to aid wider planning in relation to improving accessibility to non-statutory childcare for families across Shetland.

2. Executive Summary

Key Findings

- Since the introduction of 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare, 80.3% of parents/carers in Shetland are happy with their chosen early learning and childcare setting. In addition, a further 80% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their current early learning and childcare setting offer was effectively meeting their needs.
- According to the survey responses, 57.1% of parents/carers **do not** make use of their full entitlement of 1140 funded hours.
- There is a demand for more childminders across the island, with a large number of parents/carers stating they would be interested in using a childminder as a source of childcare if this was an option. This was noted in both early learning and childcare and school-aged childcare however, the demand was more prevalent among early learning and childcare users, where they can use childminders as part of their funded entitlement.
- 76.5% of parents/carers use funded hours to allow them to work, whilst 63.9% also use it to enhance their child's learning and development.
- The survey suggests that, instead of formal provision, the majority of parents rely on informal networks – friends and family – as their main form of school-aged childcare.
- Current school-aged childcare facilities across Shetland do not meet the needs of its families, with 52% of parents/carers stating that access to school-aged childcare in Shetland is not sufficient to meet their family needs. In comparison, only 21% believe that their needs are being met through current provision.
- The findings conclude that nearly half of all parents/carers with school-aged children face barriers when accessing childcare.
- Respondents want an increase in out-of-school childcare options, particularly in local areas. This includes more provision before school begins, after school finishes, and during the school holidays.

3. Survey Results

General Information

Question 1

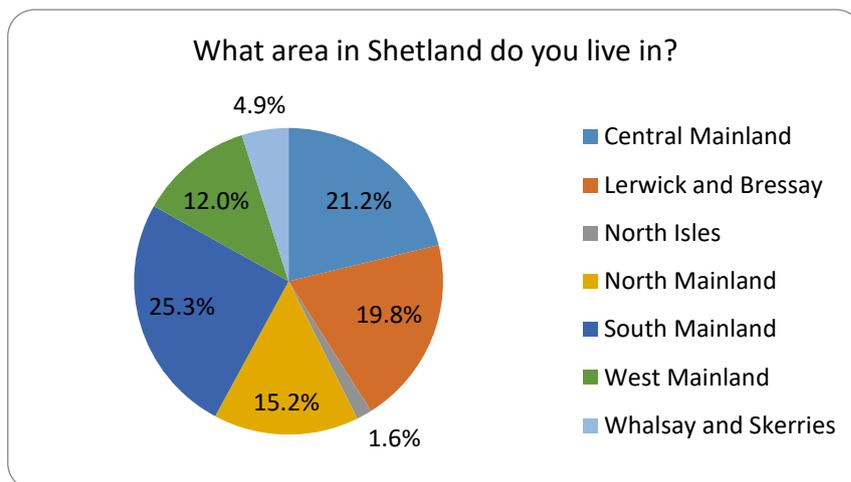
What area in Shetland do you live in?

Of those who completed the survey, the highest response rate came from those who lived in South Mainland (25.3%), followed by 21.2% (78 responses) living in Central Mainland and 19.8% (73 responses) living in Lerwick and Bressay. 15.2% of respondents lived in North Mainland and 12% lived in the West. 4.9% lived in Whalsay and Skerries while 1.6% came from the North Isles.

Question 2

How many children are in your family?

The majority of respondents (44%) had 2 children in their family, followed by 24.5% of respondents (90 responses) having 3 children and 23.4% (86 responses) having 1 child. 6.5% of respondents (24 responses) had 4 children followed by 1.6% (6 responses) with 5 children.



Question 3

How old is your child/children (please tick all that apply)?

37.2% of respondents had a child that was of nursery age (3-4 years). Further, the majority of respondents had a child that was of school-aged, with 38.3% (the largest proportion) having a child aged 5-7. Nearly 30% of respondents had a child that was under the age of 3.

How old is your child/children (please tick all that apply)?			
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	0-2	29.9%	110
2	3-4	37.2%	137
3	5-7	38.3%	141
4	7-9	32.6%	120
5	9-12	34.0%	125
6	Older	22.6%	83
answered			368
skipped			0

Question 4

Does your child(ren) have a disability or an additional support need?

18.2% of respondents (40 responses) stated that they had a child that has a disability or an additional support need.

Question 5

Do you currently have a child who is registered for funded early learning and childcare?

32.2% of the total number of respondents (119 responses) had a child who was registered for funded early learning and childcare.

Section A

Section A relates to funded early learning and childcare. Funded hours are offered to all 3 and 4-year olds in Scotland, and to eligible 2-year olds. The offer of 1140 hours per year of free early learning and childcare was phased in across Shetland between 2017 and 2020, with all settings offering the full entitlement by August 2020. Section A considers current use and factors that influence the use of funded early learning and childcare. In addition, Section A also asked for views about the need for additional childcare over and above their funded entitlement.

Section A was answered by 119 parents/carers.

The Council has a statutory duty to carry out a consultation on the delivery of early learning and childcare and to consult with parents/carers on a regular basis. The recurring consultation ensures that services are continuously taking into account local needs.

Question 6

What early learning and childcare setting does/will your child attend?

The responses received represents children who attend 24 of the settings out of the 31 who are within the funded early learning and childcare offer.

Question 7

Are you using your full entitlement of funded hours (30 hours per week term-time, 22.75 hours per week year round)?

Of the 119 responses, more than half (57.1%) stated that they do not make use of their full entitlement of 1140 funded hours. This is compared to 42.9% of parents/carers who stated that they do use their full entitlement.

Question 8

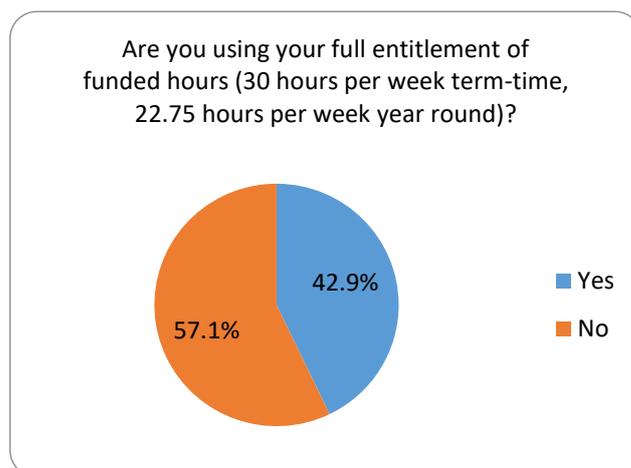
If you answered No, please provide the reasons why.

This question was answered by 67 respondents and skipped by 301. Of the 67 responses, the most common reason why parents/carers chose to not use their full entitlement was because they believe that their child is too young and not yet ready to for a full 30 hours per week (or 22.75 hours per week year round) in a formal setting (38 responses). Indeed, many responses mentioned 'easing their child in' while gradually increasing their entitled hours over a period of time. Another key factor was that parents/carers did not require the full hours (23 responses), for example, because they work part-time. Four responses claimed that they do not use their full entitlement because they want quality time with their child and three responses claim that it is because their setting's opening times do not fit in with their working schedules.

The following comments are noted:

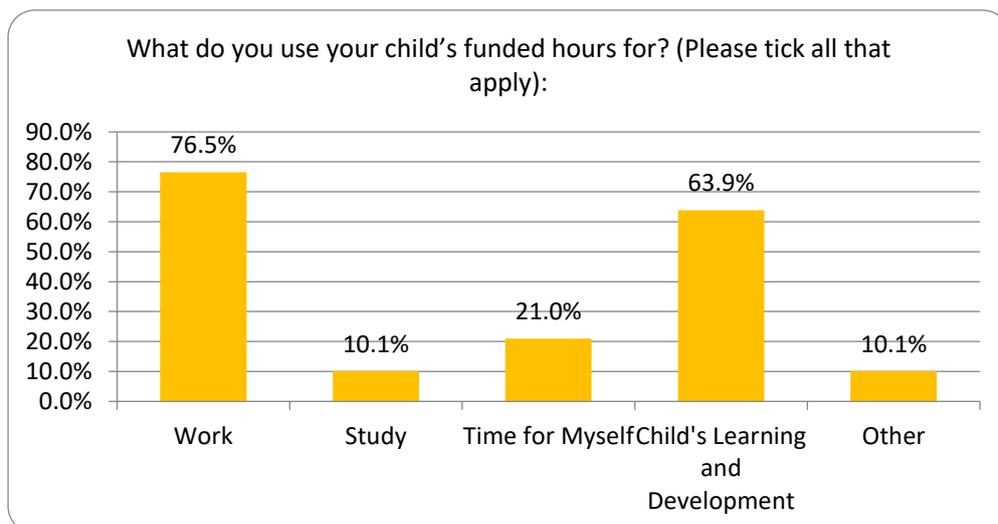
- *Planning to build up hours as time goes on to aid with transition for first nursery year.*
- *I use 20 hours per week as I feel at the moment that is long enough for my son, each term I plan to increase the hours to prepare him for the school day*
- *Feel it is too much for him to send him his full 30 hours as he is tired after going 4 mornings a week.*
- *Not needed as I don't work full time and feel it's a very long day for a 3 year old. Maybe coming closer to my child starting school I would consider upping their hours.*
- *I don't feel that my 3 year old is able/ready to attend nursery for such long hours. It also doesn't fit in with my working hours*

Question 9



What do you use your child's funded hours for?

76.5% (91 responses) of respondents stated that they use funded early learning and childcare to work, whilst 63.9% (76 responses) use it for their child's learning and development. 21% (25 responses) use it for personal time. This implies that funded hours allows for an increased ability for parents/carers to attend employment.



Question 10

Since the introduction of 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare in your area are you happy with the choice of settings available to you (i.e. local authority settings, funded provider settings and childminders)?

Of the 117 responses this question received, 80.3% of respondents (94 responses) stated that they were happy with the choice of early learning and childcare settings available to them while 12.8% stated that they were not.

Therefore, a vast majority of parents/carers are satisfied with their current early learning and childcare provision.

Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Yes	80.3%	94
2 No	12.8%	15
3 Unsure	6.8%	8
answered		117

Question 11

If you answered No, please provide further information.

This question was answered by 22 respondents and skipped by 346. Of these 22 responses, the most common theme that emerged was how there is a lack of childminders in the local area and a number of respondents claimed that they would use childminders if more were available (9 responses). Another key factor to emerge was that there was limited choice of provision in their local areas (7 responses). The most common areas where these answers were received were Nesting, North Isles, Sandwick and Bressay.

Additionally, insufficient opening times and flexibility of early learning and childcare settings was also mentioned, particularly for parents/carers who work shift patterns (2 responses). One comment also stated how the effects of the potential merger of two settings would mean not having the option of a smaller setting.

The following comments are noted:

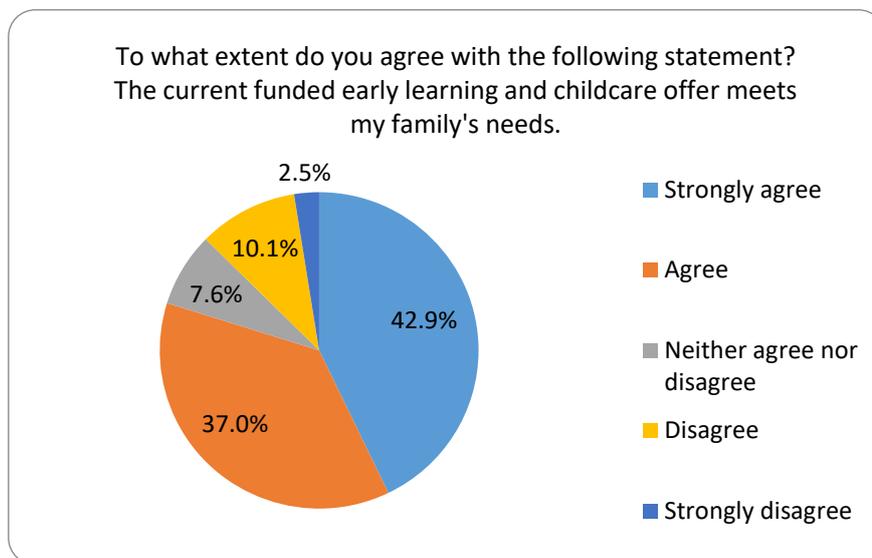
- *I am happy with the current provision but would be concerned that if the council was to merge [settings] it would potentially remove choice for parents in Lerwick to have the option of a smaller setting.*

- *I'd love there to be more childminders in my local area. A split placement between nursery and childminder would be excellent as a full day in nursery can be quite overwhelming for 3-4 year olds.*
- *It's a shame there are no childminders in our area as I wonder if that more personalised care would suit my child better.*
- *There is no nursery at the school of my catchment area (Nesting) which made it difficult to know where best to register my 3 year old.*
- *There is no nursery where I live (Nesting) and the closest ones don't offer wrap around hours so I was pushed / forced to put my children to Scalloway which isn't ideal in terms of connecting children with their community.*
- *Not flexible enough to meet my shift pattern needs*

Question 12

To what extent do you agree with the following statement, 'the current funded early learning and childcare offer meets my family's needs'?

79.9% (95 responses) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their current early learning and childcare offer was meeting their needs. In comparison, 12.6% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, while 7.6% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Question 13

If you disagree/strongly disagree with the above statement, please provide further information.

This question was answered by 17 respondents and skipped by 351. Of these 17 responses, the most common theme to emerge were parents/carers stating that the opening times, in particular closing times, were not in-line with their working schedule, making it difficult for parents/carers to both work and pick up their child (11 responses). The most common areas where these answers were received were North Mainland and South Mainland. Three responses mentioned how the limited opening times reduces the ability to take up employment opportunities. In addition, a number of responses mentioned that an increase in flexibility of opening times is needed due to shift patterns. Further, two responses mentioned how, while their early learning and childcare setting was sufficient in meeting their needs, there was limited provision available for children aged under 3 years.

The following comments are noted:

- *Being open at 8am is great and works for me for starting work, but closing at 4pm is very tricky with finishing work/travelling time to get there for Early Years closing.*
- *If the placement could be open until 5 that may be more useful in terms of work patterns.*
- *I have the opportunity to work longer hours but because there are no after school options for me I have been forced to keep my hours down.*
- *Increase to cover 35 hrs would enable parents to work a full 5 days, whereas 30 really only covers 4 days so have to reduce working hours (which can be problematic) or rely on family members*
- *As I work shifts then a little more flexibility within the setting would be good. I.e. if they were in for 5 hours then they could start / finish an hour earlier or later some days.*

- *Very little provision for under 3s especially flexible provision*

Question 14

Were you aware of the full registration process prior to registering?

Prior to registering, 74.6% of respondents claimed to be aware of the full registration process, while 15.3% were not aware of the full process and 10.2% claimed to be unsure.

Question 15

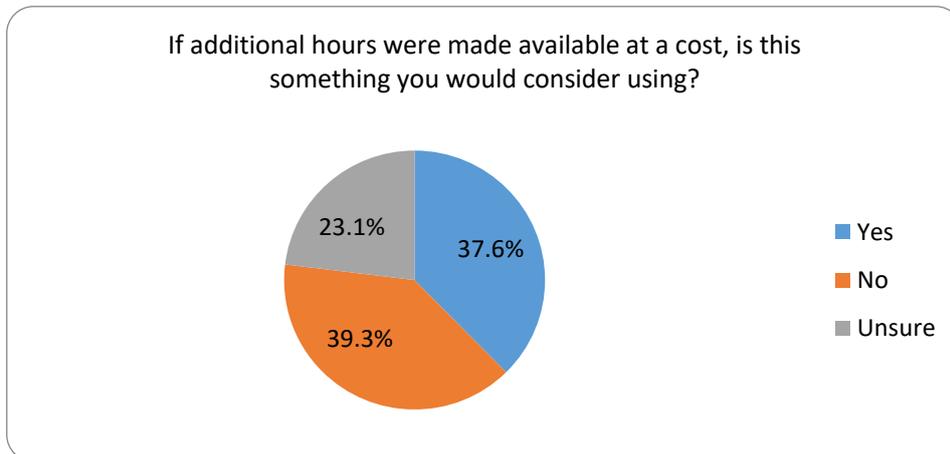
Were the options for funded hours clear enough to understand (single placement, split placement, blended placement)?

In terms of how clear the options for funded hours were to understand, 75.4% (89 responses) of respondents stated that the options were clear, compared to 12.7% (15 responses) who stated that they were not. 11.9% (14 responses) of respondents claimed to be unsure.

Question 16

If additional hours were made available at a cost, is this something you would consider using?

Of the 119 responses, 37.6% of respondents (44 responses) said that they would pay for additional hours while 39.3% (46 responses) stated that they would not. A further 23.1% (27 responses) were unsure.



Question 17

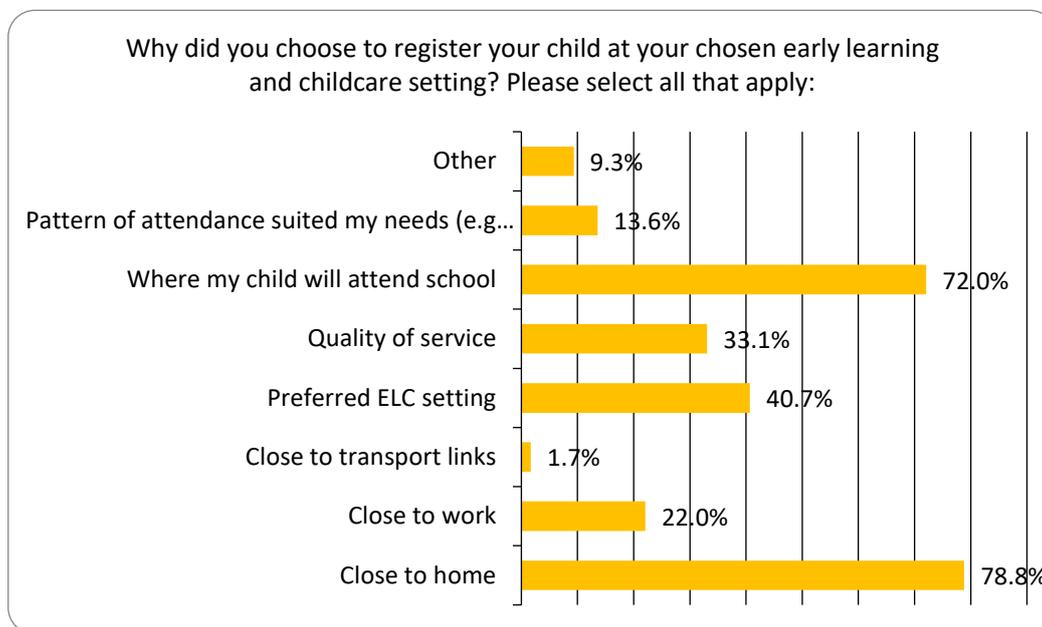
Do you feel that you received adequate information on your chosen early learning and childcare setting before your child started attending?

74.6% of respondents (88 responses) believed that they received adequate information on their chosen setting before their child started attending. In comparison, 19.5% (23 responses) stated that they did not receive adequate information while 5.9% (7 responses) claimed to be unsure.

Question 18

Why did you choose to register your child at your chosen early learning and childcare setting?

Choice of provider was influenced by a range of factors, with convenience of location, particularly being close to home or their chosen school setting being the most common answer. 78.8% of respondents claimed that they chose their setting because it was close to home while 72% stated that it was because it was where their child will attend school). Quality of service (33.1%) was also a common factor, as well as because it was their 'preferred ELC setting' (40.7%).



Question 19

We aim to increase the amount of time children spend playing outside. If more outdoor provision was on offer, would you be interested in this for your child/children?

Of the 118 responses that this question received, 68.6% of respondents (81 responses) stated that they were interested in an increase in outdoor provision for their child while 22.9% (27 responses) claimed to be unsure. 8.5% (10 responses) of parents/carers were not interested in additional outdoor provision.

Question 20

If there are any barriers to you currently accessing funded early learning and childcare please give details.

This question was answered by 18 respondents and skipped by 350. Of these 18 responses, the most common themes to emerge in regards to barriers to funded ELC was the limited option of available provisions (3 responses), as well as the opening hours of settings not being flexible enough to fit in with working parents, particularly those with shift patterns. Two responses mentioned how working from home has made childcare issues easier while one response claimed cost to be an issue.

It should be noted that 9 of the 18 responses answered 'N/A' or 'No'.

The following comments are noted:

- *I work shifts and can't use my hours to just use them as I need*
- *Again, little to no options regarding child care outside of school hours.*
- *I am so lucky that I work from home at the moment or I don't know what I would have done workwise.*

Question 21

Do you have any other comments about funded early learning and childcare?

This question was answered by 31 respondents (and skipped by 337). The most common theme was parents /carers choosing this question to praise their current setting (8 responses). Other regular themes to arise were insufficient opening times (5 responses), particularly holiday provision and for parents who work shift patterns. Other regular topics included limited provision in local areas (2 responses), the time when funded placements becomes available for 3-year olds (2 responses), and confusing online information (2 responses), particularly when choosing their child's patterns of attendance. One response mentioned an interest in using a childminder had it been available, while another mentioned the effects of having settings that take on too many children.

It should be noted that 5 of the 31 responses answered 'N/A' or 'No'.

The following comments are noted:

- *The after school hours which were taken away from Mossbank school should be reinstated. Since its been stopped there are even more parents who could and would use the service. But the option was taken away and it now makes working enough hours to live comfortably a huge struggle.*
- *I am really pleased with the quality of care and the help I received in getting my son childcare at the nursery. Everyone at point of service bends over backwards to help our family.*
- *Funded placements should be available as soon as the child reaches 3 years of age, you shouldn't have to wait until the start of a term*
- *As I previously said, the new set up is much more confusing with lots of parents unsure when and what times to put for their child. I would like to see some example timings (e.g. morning session, morning with lunch etc.) as this would make it easier for parents to choose. There's usually a lot of uncertainty amongst parents when trying to decide which 'pattern' to choose for their child.*
- *The creation of mega-nursery's is making children scared to attend*

Summary of Main Findings

- 57.1% of parents/carers in Shetland do not make use of their full entitlement of 1140 funded hours. The majority of those who do not use their full entitlement believe that 30 hours a week is too many for their child to be in a formal setting and are choosing to gradually 'ease their child in'.
- The survey claims that, since the introduction of 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare, the vast majority of parents/carers (80.3%) in Shetland are happy with their chosen setting.
- In addition, 80% of respondents (95 responses) either strongly agreed or agreed that their current setting offer was effectively meeting their needs.
- The majority of parents/carers use their funded hours to allow them to work (76.5%), whilst 63.9% of parents also use it to enhance their child's learning and development. This suggests that the funded hours are supporting parents into employment.
- The survey suggests that a number of parents/carers are interested in using childminders as part of their funded entitlement if there were more available.
- The survey claims that a number of parents/carers would welcome increased opening times in settings to better fit around working-days. There is also a want for flexible childcare, particularly among parents who do not have set working patterns.

Section B

Section B is centred around school-aged childcare. This section examines current school-aged childcare facilities in Shetland, assesses whether this provision does enough to meet the needs of parents/carers, and aims to see where services may need to be developed in the future.

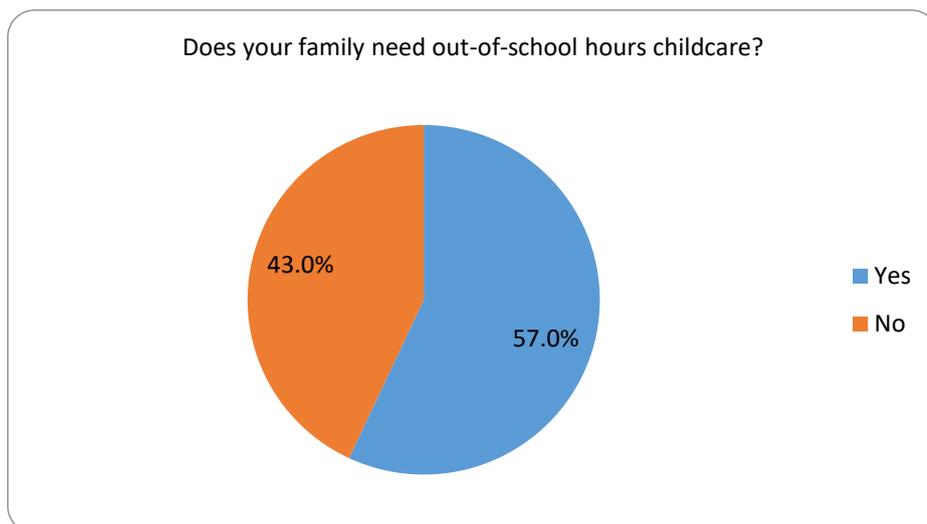
This section to all parents /carers and received a high response rate, with 316 responses in total. A section on school-aged childcare has been included due to increasing anecdotal evidence around the issues facing families in relation to the limited availability of non-statutory childcare in Shetland and the detrimental impact it was having.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government's has set out, in the report 'A Fairer, Greener Scotland Programme for Government 2021-22', an aim to improve access to childcare and "build a new system of wraparound childcare for school age children, providing care before and after school, all year round, and supporting parents – particularly on low incomes – to have secure and stable employment". Therefore, by including this section and assessing current needs, it will provide further information on the demand and barriers around school-aged childcare in Shetland.

Question 23

Does your family need out-of-school hours childcare?

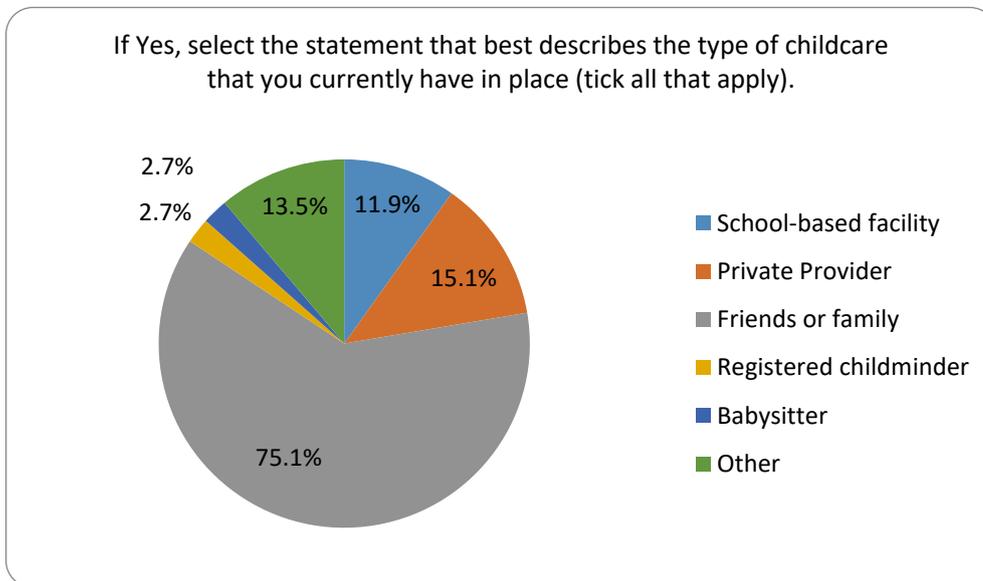
Of the 316 responses received in this question, **just over half (57%) stated that they require out-of-school childcare provision.** This is compared to 43% of parents/carers (136 responses) who stated that they do not need this type of provision.



Question 24

If Yes, select the statement that best describes the type of childcare that you currently have in place.

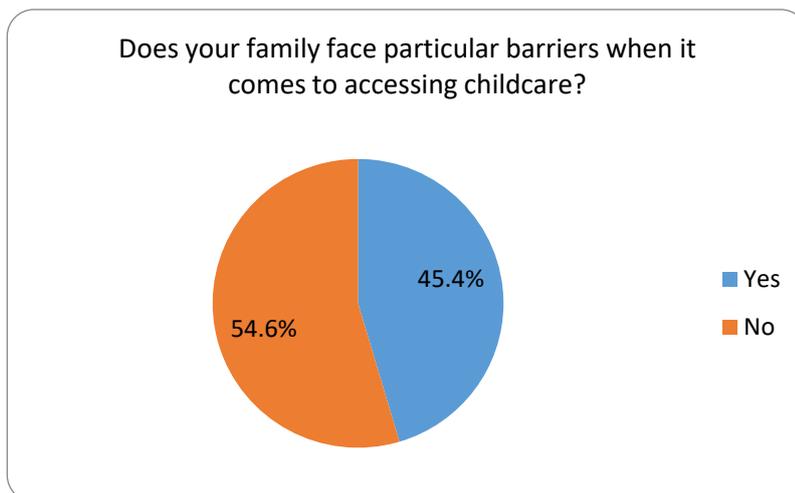
75.1% of respondents (139 responses) stated friends or family as a source of childcare. Furthermore, this question shows that 2.7% of respondents (5 responses) use a registered childminder, 15.1% of respondents (28 responses) use a private provider and 11.9% of parents/carers (22 responses) use a school-based facility. Therefore, a vast majority of families across Shetland rely on informal support networks, such as family or friends in their local area, for childcare.



Question 25

Does your family face particular barriers when it comes to accessing childcare?

This question was answered by 174 respondents (and skipped by 194). 54.6% of parents/carers (95 responses) stated that do not face any particular barriers when accessing school-aged childcare compared to the 45.4% (79 responses) of parents/carers that stated that they did.



Question 26

If Yes, please provide further information.

This question received 81 respondents and a wide-range of topics were covered. From the answers provided, the most common barrier to accessing school-aged childcare is the lack of provision available in local areas. Indeed, over 50% of those who answered this question (43 responses) cited that the lack of choice of provision was a significant barrier to their family. This is noted as being particularly difficult for working families.

In addition, affordability (15 responses), the limiting effects on employability (14 responses) and struggling to find family/friends to rely on (12 responses) were also mentioned as recurring issues to accessing school-aged childcare. It was regularly implied that these particular barriers causes high levels of stress for families.

Likewise, further barriers such as the lack of childminders on the island (9 responses), issues with opening times (7 responses), and the lack of holiday provision (6 responses) were also cited. 5 responses also mentioned travel/lengthy distance to be an issue.

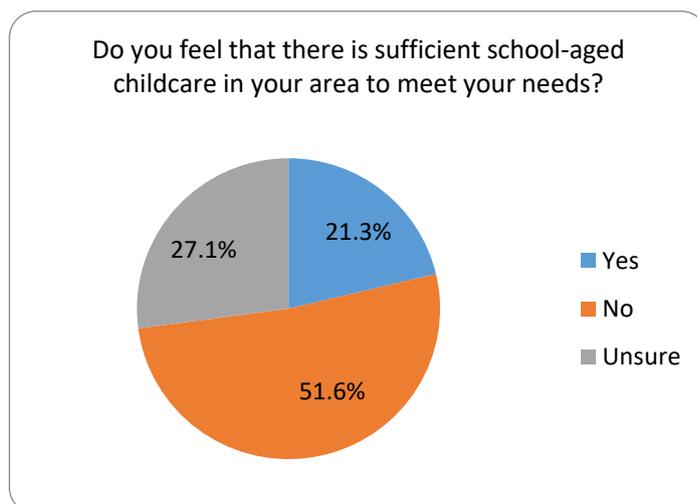
The following comments are noted:

- *We need out of hours childcare but there is none. We have no family that can help, there are no childminders in this part of Shetland, no school based facilities, and my friends are in the same boat. This has locked me out of employment!*
- *No childcare locally for after school hours that can collect from school and have until finished work. Really difficult juggling anyone to look after the children on the days that I'm working. Would be more than happy to pay for this if it was available locally.*
- *There are no childminders, school-based facilities, private providers or even babysitters in the area*
- *We currently have NO long term solution as to where our 6 year old can go before and after school on the days that my husband and I both work*
- *Affordability is certainly an issue, both of us work part time in order to reduce childcare costs, and have put our youngest to Scalloway in order to get time to do work.*
- *Relying on elderly grandparents for childcare which is not ideal. Working in care with un-social hours means I frequently consider having to leave my employment due to the stress of having a lack of childcare.*
- *There is NO childcare – there are no childminders OR wrap around services.*

Question 27

Do you feel that there is sufficient school-aged childcare in your area to meet your needs?

Of the 310 responses, 51.6% (160 responses) stated that they believed that families in their community do not have access to an adequate level of childcare to meet their family needs. A further 27.1% (84 responses) of respondents claimed to be unsure while 21.3% (66 responses) believed that there is sufficient school-aged childcare in their area. Therefore, this question suggests that the current school-aged childcare facilities across Shetland are not meeting the needs of its families.



Question 28

If you answered No, please provide further information.

This question received 154 responses with the answers being similar to those provided in question 26 (see above). As before, the most common theme to childcare needs not being met was because there is a lack of school-aged provision across the island. 106 responses mentioned that the lack of provision in their local area results in their needs not being met.

Additionally, reliance on informal networks was another recurring theme (24 responses), and how there is very limited out-of-school provision outside of friends and family. Further, lack of holiday provision (16 responses), lack of childminders (22 responses) and the negative effects of limited provision on employment (21 responses) were also commonly cited, and how this is particularly difficult for working families.

Issues with cost and affordability were mentioned 11 times, as well as the issues in travelling to childcare facilities located in central areas (8 responses). Parents/carers working shift patterns was also noted several times.

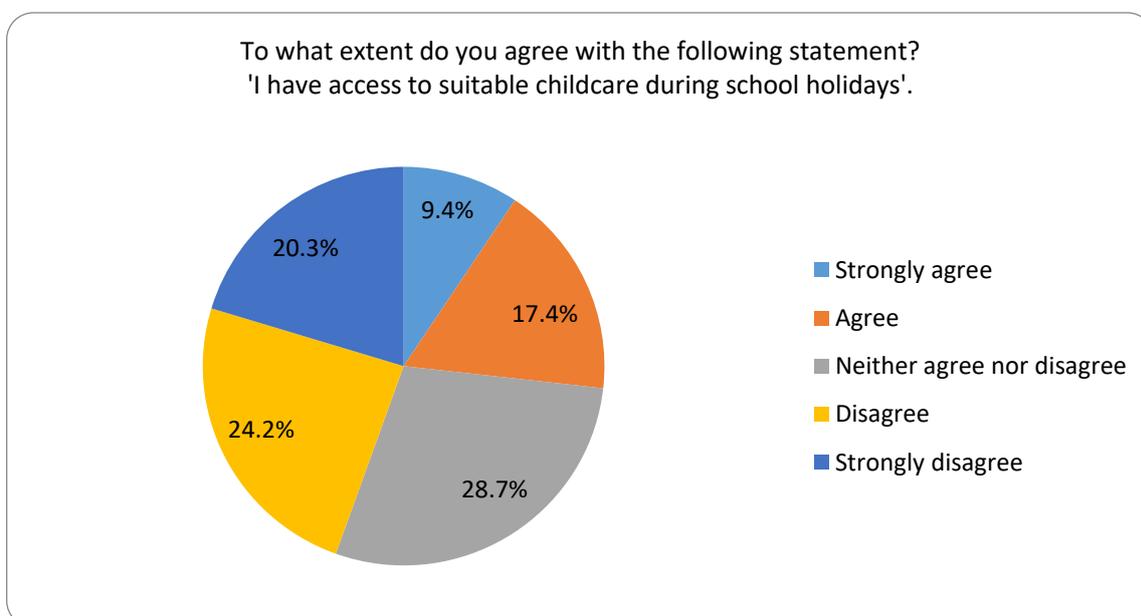
The following comments are noted:

- *There is no out of school childcare/club available in my area. If so it would be something I would access.*
- *Early morning/after school provision would enable working parents to complete a full working day. At present there is no provision for this.*
- *Currently one registered childminder in the area which is the only option for childcare other than friends and family. No other before or after school provision provided in the area.*
- *There is only one registered child minder for the whole of the North mainland. No after school clubs or activities allow later pick up. This is a let down and very restrictive.*
- *The lack of childcare provision results in one parent having to reduce their working hours to match the school times. If childcare was readily available, both of us may be able to work full time hours.*
- *There are no after school clubs, childminders or childcare facilities in my local area so it makes it impossible to work more than a school day. I have had to leave my previous job solely for this reason.*
- *There is absolutely nothing available in my area.*
- *There are no childcare facilities for school aged children. If you don't have friends/family who can help then you would need to put your children to the Lerwick or brae school (whichever is closest to your work).*
- *No after school childcare in my area what so ever. This makes it almost impossible for a working family to manage. It is very stressful trying to find a family member or friend who is available to pick my son up from school when I am at work.*
- *There is no formal childcare in our area. We rely solely on family and friends which is extremely challenging*
- *There is nothing in my area, I don't have a term time only job so school holidays are a complete nightmare.*
- *I feel current provisions are too expensive which means I am unable to use them.*

Question 29

To what extent do you agree with the following statement, 'I have access to suitable childcare during school holidays'?

The survey suggests that the majority of parents/carers do not have access to childcare during school holidays. 44.5% of respondents (138 responses) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they can access childcare during school holidays, while a following 28.7% (89 responses) of respondents stated to 'neither agree nor disagree'. In comparison, 26.8% (83 responses) of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had suitable holiday provision.



Question 30

To what extent do you agree with the following statement, 'I find the school-aged childcare in my area to be affordable'?

9% of respondents (28 responses) either agreed or strongly agreed that they found their school-aged childcare to be affordable. In comparison, 26.9% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that school-aged childcare was affordable. 34.6% of respondents (107 responses), the largest response, claimed this statement to be 'not applicable' while 29.4% (91 responses) chose to neither agree nor disagree. Therefore, the majority of parents/carers believe that they cannot answer this question adequately as they are not accessing school-aged childcare in the first place.

Question 31

What changes to local childcare provision, if any, would meet the needs of your family?

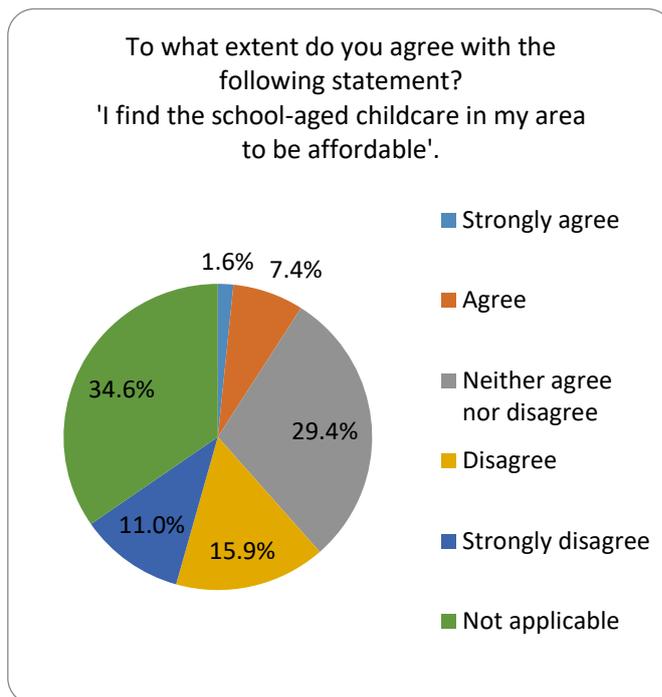
This question received a high response rate, with 179 answers provided (and 189 skipped). This suggests that parents are keen to see changes in local childcare provision across Shetland.

118 responses were calling for an increase in the number of out-of-school childcare options, with numerous responses specifying wanting provision within their local area instead of having to travel to centralised facilities (e.g. in Lerwick or Scalloway). Of these, 52 responses specifically mentioned wanting provision after-school while a further 18 responses mentioned wanting a breakfast club. Indeed, parents would like to see an increase in options and accessibility to school-aged care, with nearly every area of the Island – North, South, West and the Northern Isles – being named as wanting further provision. In particular, parents/carers asked for provision that catered to the average working day, to reduce the constraints that a lack of childcare places on employment.

Another common theme that emerged was respondents wanting an increase in provision during the holiday periods (30 responses), again particularly to help reduce the strain put on working families. Affordability was another common factor that was mentioned (30 responses) with numerous respondents claiming that it was too expensive and asking for a lower rate. Two responses mentioned creating a 'sibling-lower rate', suggesting that this would help with the costs. Nine responses mentioned wanting provision that involved some sort of sport/club or other creative activity, for example, an "affordable summer holiday sport camps". Additionally, four responses asked for an increase in flexible provision, in particular for those who work shifts, while another four responses mentioned having better care in-place for children with additional support needs. Finally, three responses asked for an increase in the number of local childminders, while two further responses asked for crèches to be created in workplaces/leisure centres.

The following comments are noted:

- *To offer something, anything! An early morning breakfast club and after school club until 5 or 6 would help.*
- *Provision of local Pre-school and School-aged childcare would give us some stability and save us relying on favours and long drives to Scalloway*
- *Higher provision during school holidays with a lower day rate*
- *If it was more affordable. What's the point of working, when all your pay goes to childcare.*
- *More provision and ones that cater during working hours. Some holiday clubs like the Clickimin start at 10 which leads to a child care issue beforehand.*

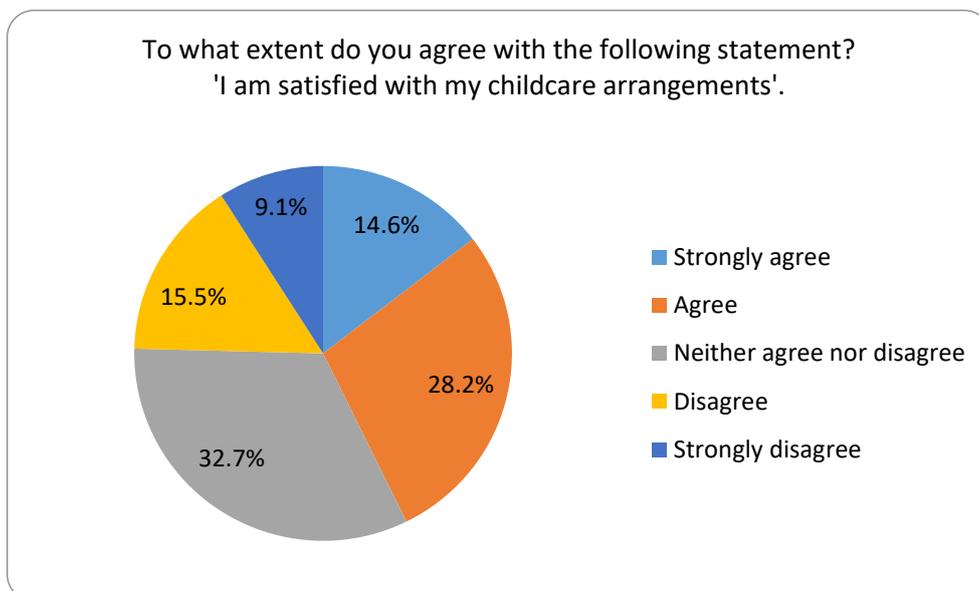


- *If childcare was provided even partially in the school holidays this would make it easier for working families. Not every job caters for term only working!*
- *We find it very expensive to cover childcare. I am currently a stay at home mum but would struggle to afford childcare costs when I find employment*
- *Before and after school clubs would be the quickest and easiest solution. A call for more registered childminders would also help. However, this would obviously take time for people to qualify. If indeed enough candidates were found.*
- *We feel that it is expensive as Mum is a part time worker, reduction in daily costs would help family.*
- *Affordability – we pay for a full time place and it is 90% of my monthly wage which is putting me in a position of extreme poverty.*
- *More after school provision to provide support and help for working families especially in rural areas. Some sort of after school club that finished at the same time as Early years would be a huge benefit to many families and ease the childcare burden that is often put onto extended family.*
- *A council run childcare facility, purpose built, ASN training provided to staff, available at outside school hours and holiday time, affordable for large families.*
- *Nothing for childcare during the holidays in our local area. Some sort of club even for some weeks in the holidays would take a huge strain from parents*

Question 32

To what extent do you agree with the following statement, 'I am satisfied with my childcare arrangements'?

42.8% (132 responses) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their childcare arrangements. In comparison, a smaller proportion, 24.6% (76 responses), chose to either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. The largest share of the responses, 32.7% (101 responses), was to neither agree nor disagree.



Question 33

Are there any comments you wish to add in relation to childcare in your area?

The question received a total of 99 responses (and was skipped by 269 respondents). The most common theme to arise was the lack of access to out-of-school aged childcare across the Island, particularly in rural areas (44 responses). Indeed, numerous responses were asking for an increase in school-aged childcare, in particular after-school. A further 20 responses mentioned the extent to which they rely on family/friends as their main form of childcare, and the struggles that arise from this. Several of these responses stated that they would like a more structured and formal approach to their childcare and would use provision if it was available. Further, it was often brought up that having provision in place would particularly help those who do not have family/friends to rely on.

Additionally, as in previous questions, another reoccurring theme was the negative effects that a lack of childcare has on employment opportunities (16 responses). Numerous parents/carers mentioned difficulties in juggling work with a lack of available childcare, with a number of respondents stating that they do not work at all because of the limited childcare provision. A further 13 responses mentioned the difficulties in general that their family face due to

limited childcare, with the lack of provision causing high levels of stress for families, particularly when informal networks (friends/family) are unable/unwell to provide care.

A further 10 responses mentioned that they would find holiday provision beneficial, while a further 11 responses chose to use this question to praise their current childcare facility. An additional 8 parents/carers stated how further provision would benefit their local area, with 1 response mentioning how families choose to leave rural areas as there is no childcare in place.

Other themes that arose were concerns around the affordability of childcare (6 responses), the difficulties in travelling to the centralised facilities (6 responses), and wanting more childminders available on the Island.

The following comments are noted:

- *There isn't any and I really feel for those who need it. It is definitely holding back people from returning to work or working the number of hours they would like to. If we didn't have the bairns grandparents support with this 1 parent would have had to take a lower-paid job in order to fit work around school/nursery hours.*
- *Choice is limited. I have changed my working to accommodate our childcare need.*
- *Something needs to be done to allow mothers to work if need be. I can't work due to there being 0 options for childcare nearby.*
- *There is no out of school child care available in my area, making it almost impossible for a working family to manage. My family would use an after school club on a regular basis if one was available.*
- *If there were more frequent after school clubs and youth clubs then I wouldn't have to rely on family members for after school childcare.*
- *There is no after school or holiday childcare in our area*
- *It is non-existent. It makes it very difficult for both parents to work without relying on friends and family – something which isn't always possible or practical. The lack of childcare provision makes rural living more difficult and less desirable.*
- *The lack of childcare is a barrier to me being able to work in my profession. Instead I have to work a low paid, unskilled local job. This is detrimental to me, my family, and Shetland's workforce.*
- *Out of school hours childcare I rely on my friends/family if they are unavailable or sick then I wouldn't know where to ask.*
- *Whilst family and friends are a godsend when there is no other provision it is a big commitment for them to take on and at times, they cancel at the last minute. A more structured provision in the local area would remove a lot of stress.*
- *I have the luxury of a very helpful and willing family to help, to whom I am indebted. If I did not have family, I could not work 9-5 out with our local area.*
- *This is a bigger issue than just childcare. There are families who have had to give up work/change their job to ensure their children can be looked after. At a time when local businesses are struggling for staff, and statistics show that a lot of Shetland is 'under employed' this issue is having a huge impact on the economy.*
- *I would like to use the out of school club more often but it would cost over £100 a week to have both my children in for 1.5 hours a day.*

Question 34

Do you have any final comments / feedback you would like to provide?

This question received a total of 63 responses (and was skipped by 305 respondents).

Of the responses provided, the most common themes to arise were the effects that a lack of childcare has on a parent/carer's ability to work (14 responses), praise given to current facilities (10 responses) and the need for more childcare across the island, particularly out-of-school childcare (8 responses). Indeed, the need for further childcare in North Mainland (3 responses), West Mainland (4 responses) and the Northern Isles (3 responses) were all mentioned.

In addition to these, provision for children under the age of 3 (9 responses), as well as developing provision out with the centralised areas (4 responses) were also regularly cited. Further themes to arise were issues with affordability (5 responses), reliance on friends and family (5 responses), the lack of childminders across the island (5 responses) and the need for flexible childcare arrangements (3 responses).

The following comments are noted:

- *There is a massive need for childcare options, all affordable, in rural Shetland, it would allow more women to get back to work.*

- *More childcare is needed for those children under 3 who are unable to access nursery – there are so few childminders or other forms of childcare for the 0-3 year olds in the North Mainland. Making it really hard for parents to go back to work.*
- *Childcare options for parents with children below nursery age are pretty much non-existent in the North Mainland. This makes it very difficult for those (like me) with no childcare support from family or friends to go back to work. And even if I were to get a place with a child minder - the cost alone wouldn't make working worthwhile. Please consider making affordable childcare more accessible to all parents in all areas.*
- *Our early years centre and primary school are excellent and we couldn't be happier with the service and care provided.*
- *There is no after school childcare in my area. We are a working family struggling to cope with the lack of childcare in the area. We would make use of an after school club on a daily basis. A breakfast club would also be used frequently if available.*
- *After school clubs or a summer club in the local area would be a huge benefit*
- *There are no childcare options on the Westside for bairns under 3. So many families struggle and it's a constant juggling act phoning around and organising who will be caring for your child. Or folk give up work because they just can't make it work for their family.*
- *Stop all the centralisation! It's killing our communities*

Summary of Main Findings

- The survey suggests that, instead of formal provision, the majority of parents rely on informal networks – friends and family – as their main form of school-aged childcare. 75% of parents use their friends and family to provide childcare, compared to the 12% who use a school-based facility.
- Current school-aged childcare facilities across Shetland do not meet the needs of its families, with 52% of parents/carers stating that access to school-aged childcare in Shetland is not sufficient to meet their family needs. In comparison, only 21% believe that their needs are being met through current provision.
- Nearly half (45.4%) of all parents/carers with school-aged children face barriers when accessing childcare.
- Across the survey, respondents were continuously calling for an increase in the number of out-of-school childcare options (118 responses), specifically in local areas. This involves more facilities providing care before school begins, after school finishes, and during the school holidays.
- The survey responses state that the lack of accessible school-aged childcare across Shetland clearly causes a significant amount of stress and difficulties for many families, particularly working parents/carers. The limiting effects that a lack of provision has on the ability to work was regularly cited.
- Numerous parents/carers find affordability and the expenses of school-aged childcare to be a barrier in accessing provision.
- When comparing the two sections of the Childcare Survey it is clear that the gaps fall within school-based childcare as opposed to ELC.