

# Early Learning and Childcare Shetland



## Parent and Carer Consultation Summary

Version 1



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# **Shetland-Wide Consultation Childcare Survey 2023/2024 Results**

## **Introduction**

This report presents the findings from a Shetland-wide survey on childcare services. The aim of the survey was to gather the views of parents and carers in Shetland about the current and future delivery of statutory early learning and childcare, as well as non-statutory childcare services.

The survey was open to parents and carers in Shetland who have a child currently receiving a funded early learning and childcare placement, a child aged 0-2 years old or a child of school-age. The survey was promoted via:

- Shetland Islands Council Facebook page
- Shetland News
- BBC Radio Shetland

The survey was open for a total of 6 weeks from Friday 1 December 2023 until Tuesday 9 January 2024 and received a total of 298 responses.

- Section A (funded early learning and childcare questions) received 94 responses
- Section B (0-2 years old questions) received 147 responses
- Section C (school-aged childcare questions) received 227 responses

A similar survey was undertaken in 2021 and received a total of 368 responses.

- Section A (funded early learning and childcare questions) received 119 responses
- Section B (school-aged childcare questions) received 316 responses

Please note that questions on 0-2 year olds childcare were not included.

The 2023/24 survey was divided into three sections:

1. Section A focused on funded early learning and childcare. This included questions about parents and carers experience of 1140 funded hours and the potential need for any additional childcare.
2. Section B focused on childcare for children aged 0-2 years. This included questions about the current barriers of childcare, the needs of families in Shetland, and interest in potential expansion for this age range.
3. Section C focused on school-aged childcare. This included questions about current school-aged childcare in Shetland and whether current provision meets the needs of parents and carers. There was also the opportunity for parents and carers to make suggestions about how this area could be developed further.

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 support wider planning in relation to improving accessibility to non-statutory childcare for families across Shetland.

## **Executive Summary**

### **High Level Messages**

#### **Section A: Early Learning and Childcare**

- 85.1% of parents and carers are satisfied with the quality of provision of their funded early learning and childcare provider. 81.9% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their current setting offer was effectively meeting their needs. Therefore, Shetland has a high satisfaction rate from parents and carers in regards to early learning and childcare.
- 60.6% of parents and carers use their full entitlement of 1140 funded hours. In 2021, 42.9% of respondents were using their full entitlement.
- 96.8% of parents and carers reported that access to funded early learning and childcare has had a positive effect on their family circumstances.
- 80.9% of parents and carers use funded hours to allow them to work.
- 78.7% of parents and carers use funded hours to enhance their child's learning and development.

#### **Section B: 0-2 Year Old Childcare**

- 49.3% of parents and carers face barriers when accessing childcare for their 0-2 year-old.
- 32% of parents and carers reported that they would prefer to stay at home with their child/children aged 0-2. 27.5% would prefer to put their child in a childcare setting, while 7% were interested in the childminder option.
- At the time of the survey, parents and carers reported that there was limited or no options for formal childcare for 0-2 year olds. This suggests there is a further need for affordable childcare for this age group. There were numerous responses noting that the lack of provision was limiting their ability to work and earn money.
- 65.4% of parents and carers expressed that they were extremely or very interested in funded childcare for 1 and 2 year olds.

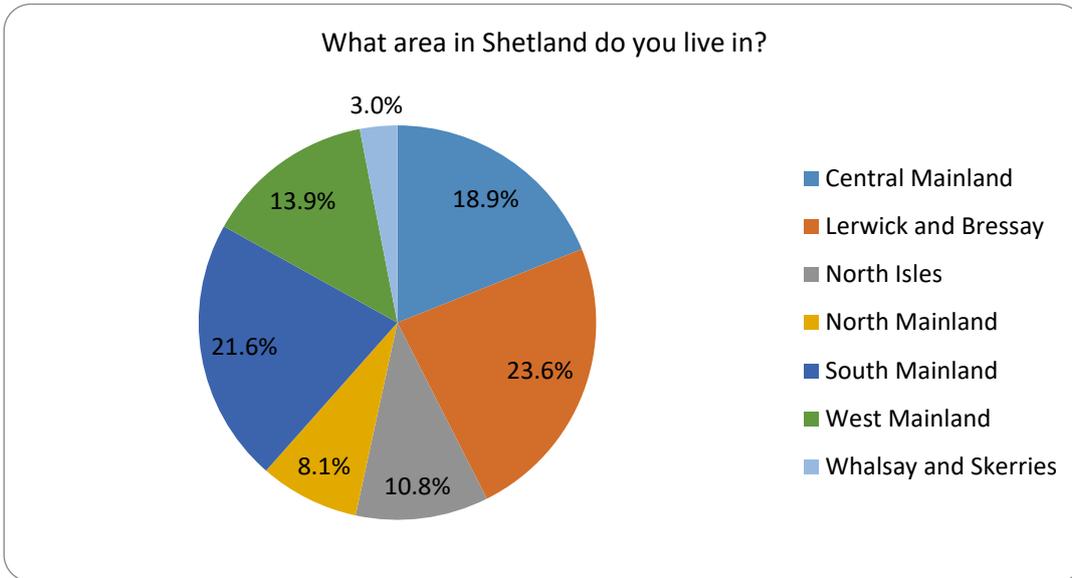
## Section C: School-aged Childcare

- 71% of parents and carers rely on informal networks such as family and friends for childcare. 23% of parents and carers use a service within a school.
- 48.6% of parents and carers stated that access to school-aged childcare in Shetland is not sufficiently meeting their family needs. In 2021, 52% of parents and carers reported that their needs were not being met.
- 39% of all parents and carers with school-aged children reported that they face barriers when accessing childcare.
- A number of respondents reported that there is a need for an increase in the number of out-of-school childcare options in their local areas. Parents and carers reported that the lack of childcare is impacting on their ability to work and causing other challenges.
- A number of parents and carers reported that school-aged childcare is unaffordable.

Question 1

**What area in Shetland do you live in?**

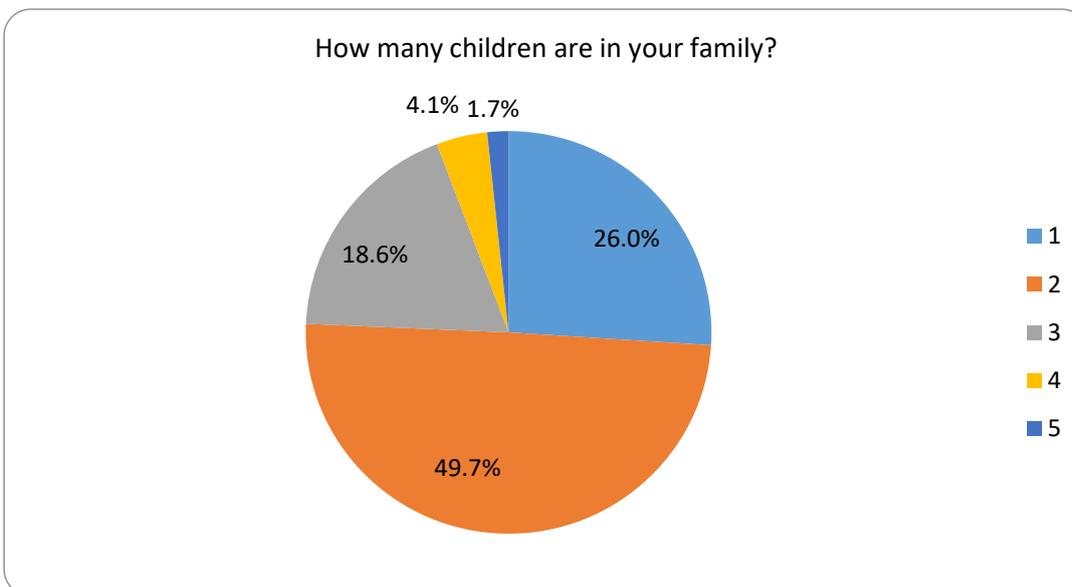
The highest response rate of 23.6% (70 responses) was from Lerwick and Bressay, followed by 21.6% (64 responses) from South Mainland and 18.9% (56 responses) from Central Mainland. 13.9% of respondents (41 responses) were from West Mainland and 10.8% from North Isles. 8.1% were from the North Mainland (24 responses) while 3% were from Whalsay and Skerries (9 responses).



Question 2

**How many children are in your family?**

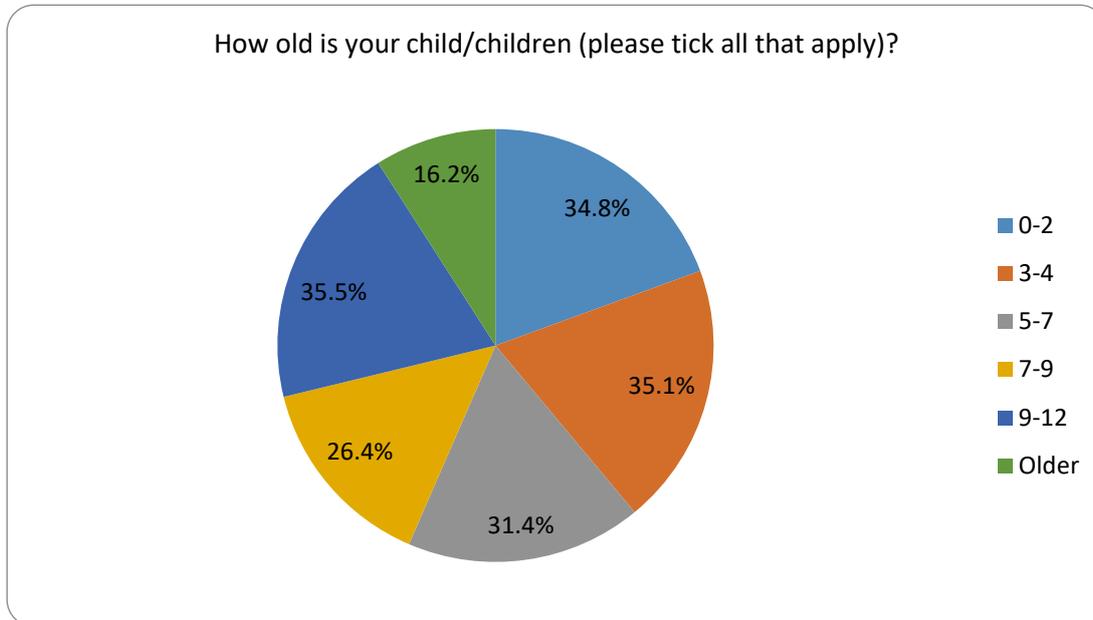
49.7% of respondents (147 responses) have 2 children in their family, followed by 26% of respondents (77 responses) having 1 child and 18.6% (55 responses) having 3 children. 4.1% of respondents (12 responses) have 4 children and 1.7% (5 responses) have 5 children.



Question 3

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

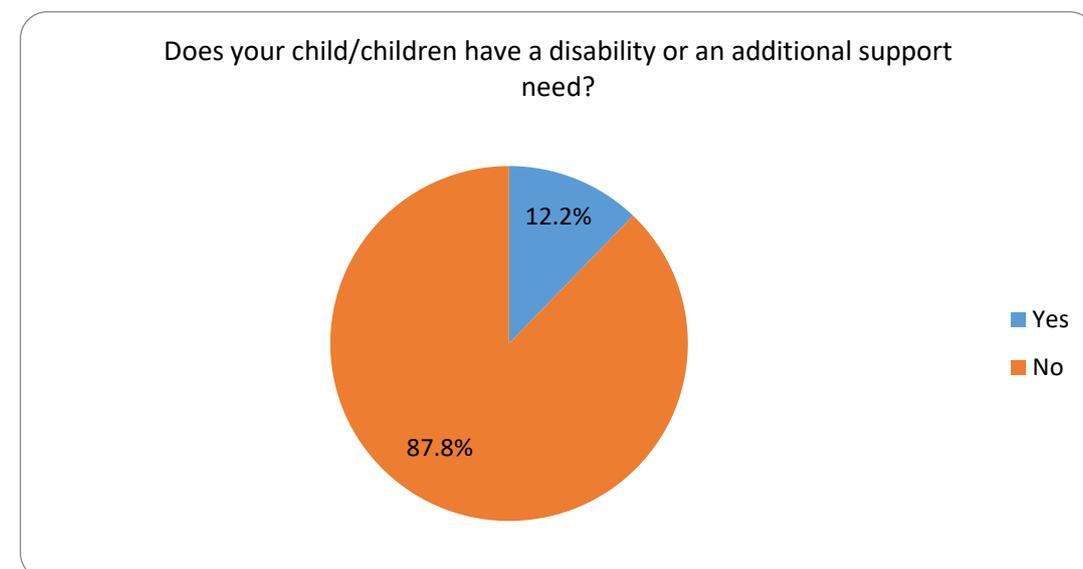
35.5% (105 responses) of respondents have a child aged 9-12, and 35.1% (104 responses) of respondents have a child aged 3-4 years. 34.8% (103 responses) have a child that is 0-2 years old, 31.4% (93 responses) have a child 5-7 years, and 26.4% (78 responses) had a child aged 7-9. 16.2% have a child that is older than 12 (48 responses).



Question 4

**Does your child/children have a disability or an additional support need?**

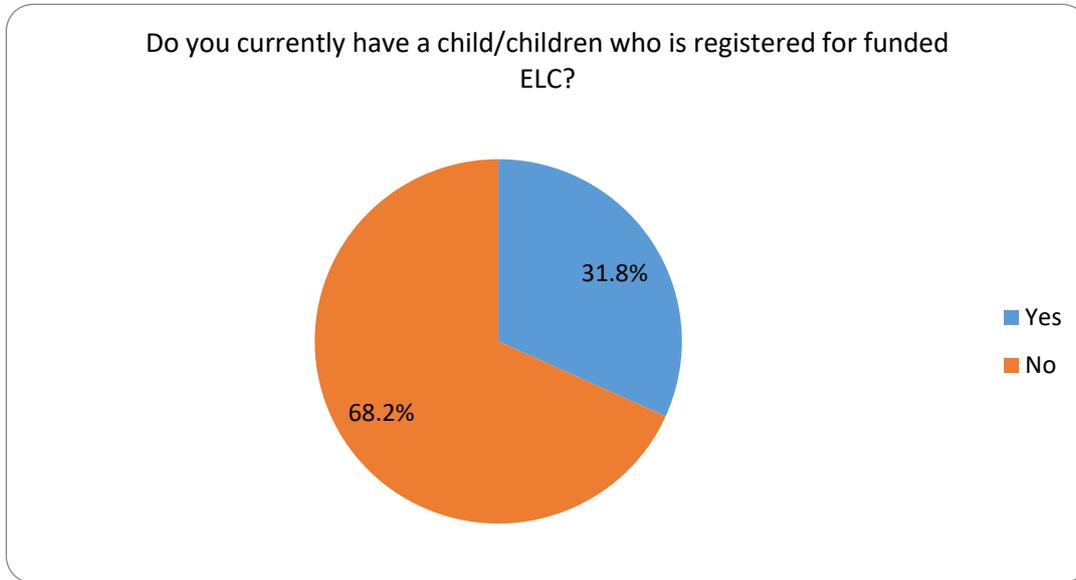
12.2% of respondents (36 responses) stated that they have a child that has a disability or an additional support need.



Question 5

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

31.8% of respondents (94 responses) have a child who is registered for funded early learning and childcare.



## Section A: Early Learning and Childcare

In Scotland, funded early learning and childcare is available to all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds. Section A considers the current uptake of early learning and childcare provision and the factors influencing this. Respondents were also asked for their views about the need for additional childcare over and above their funded entitlement.

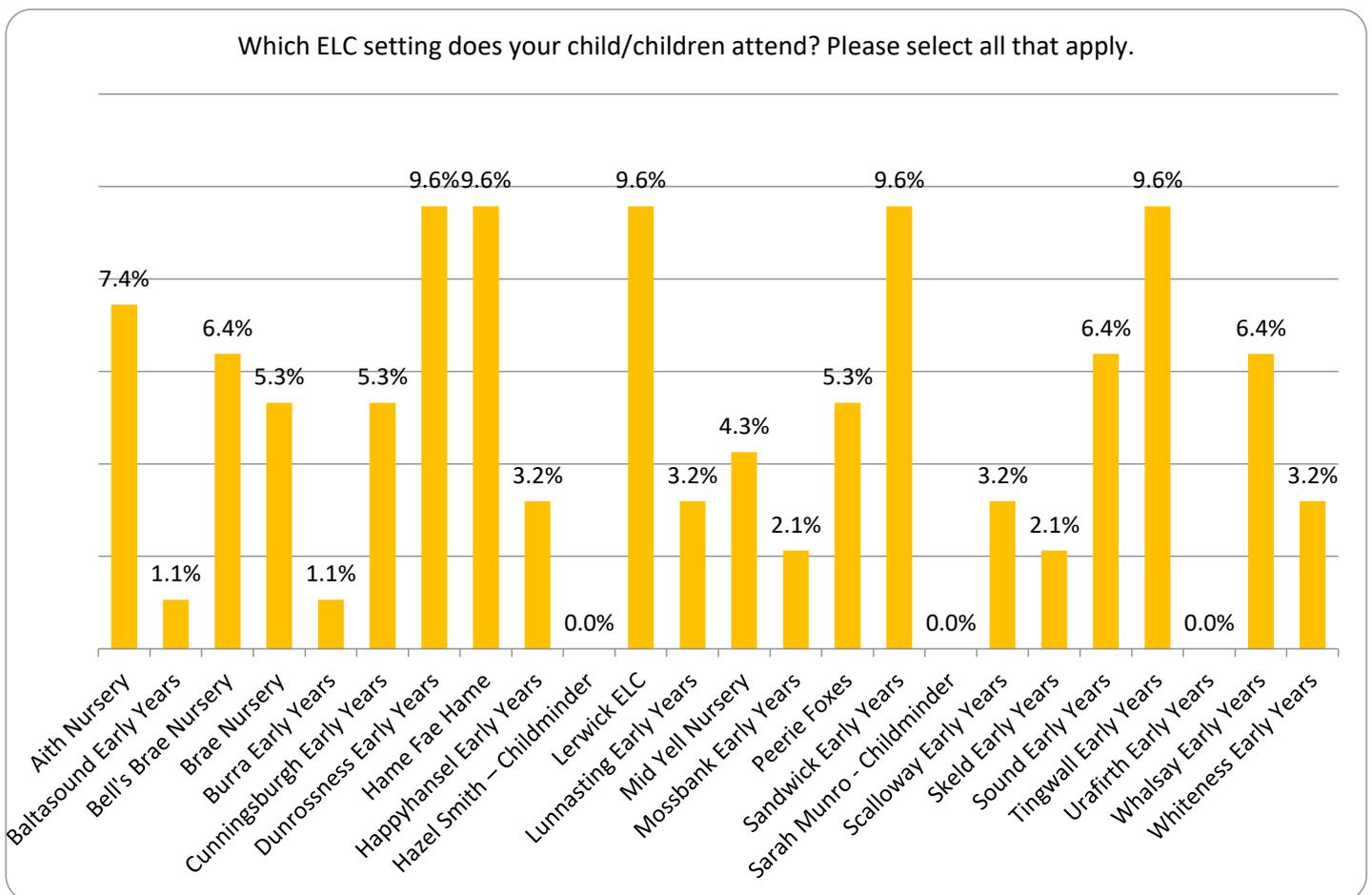
Section A was answered by 94 parents and carers.

The Council has a statutory duty to carry out a consultation on the delivery of early learning and childcare. This ensures that the views of parents and carers are taken into account when planning for service delivery.

### Question 6

**Which early learning and childcare setting does your child/children attend? Please select all that apply.**

The responses received represents children who attend 21 out of 24 funded early learning and childcare settings. No responses were received from Hazel Smith (childminder), Sarah Munro (childminder) and Urafirth Early Years.



Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Aith Nursery	7.4%	7
2	Baltasound Early Years	1.1%	1
3	Bell's Brae Nursery	6.4%	6
4	Brae Nursery	5.3%	5
5	Burra Early Years	1.1%	1
6	Cunningsburgh Early Years	5.3%	5
7	Dunrossness Early Years	9.6%	9
8	Hame Fae Hame	9.6%	9
9	Happyhansel Early Years	3.2%	3
10	Hazel Smith – Childminder	0.0%	0
11	Lerwick ELC	9.6%	9
12	Lunnasting Early Years	3.2%	3
13	Mid Yell Nursery	4.3%	4
14	Mossbank Early Years	2.1%	2
15	Peerie Foxes	5.3%	5
16	Sandwick Early Years	9.6%	9
17	Sarah Munro - Childminder	0.0%	0
18	Scalloway Early Years	3.2%	3
19	Skeld Early Years	2.1%	2
20	Sound Early Years	6.4%	6
21	Tingwall Early Years	9.6%	9
22	Urafirth Early Years	0.0%	0
23	Whalsay Early Years	6.4%	6
24	Whiteness Early Years	3.2%	3

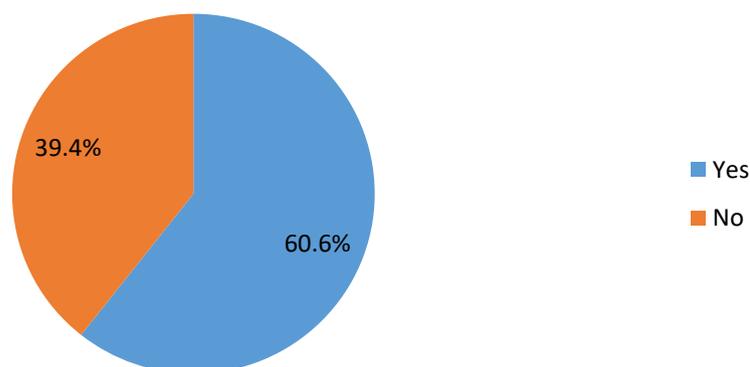
### Question 7

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

60.6% (57 responses) reported that they make use of their full entitlement of 1140 funded hours. This is compared to 39.4% (37 responses) of parents and carers who reported that they do not use their full entitlement.

In 2021, 42.9% of parents and carers reported that they use their full entitlement.

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



### Question 8

#### **If you answered no, are there any reasons why?**

This question was answered by 37 respondents and skipped by 259. The most common reason why parents and carers chose to not use their full entitlement was because parents and carers did not require the full hours (14 responses). For example, reasons given were because they work part-time or that their child is too young and not yet ready for the full entitlement (10 responses). A number of responses mentioned 'easing their child in' while gradually increasing their entitled hours over a period of time. 9 responses reported that they do not use their full entitlement of hours because they want quality time with their child. 1 response mentioned that there was no nursery setting in their local area. Another response stated that they are unable to use their full hours as their early learning and childcare setting does not offer the full entitlement.

The following comments are noted:

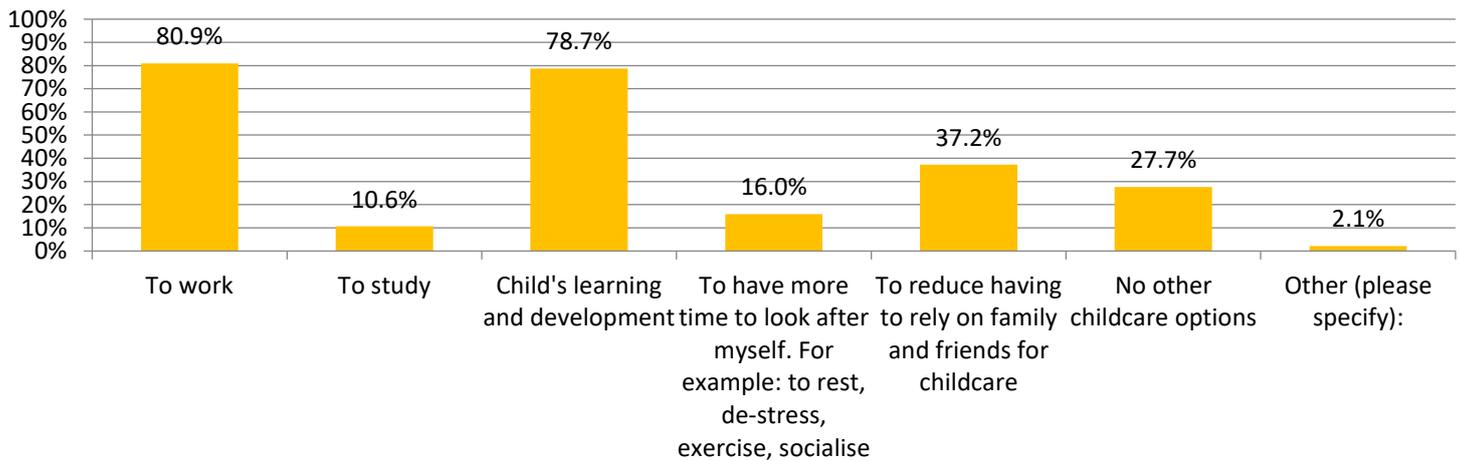
- *Too much for child at the moment. Will increase hours over time.*
- *We have made the choice to have a parent who works part time so that our child doesn't need to be in nursery full time. We feel that this is preferable than such long hours in a setting at this young age.*
- *We don't have a nursery in our area but we do have a school. So I am keeping him at our local toddler group so they he is familiar with the school and children as this will be the school he will attend.*
- *We are keen to spend time with our child at home as well before they progress into full-time education in school.*

### Question 9

**What are your main reasons for using funded early learning and childcare? Please select all that apply:**

80.9% (76 responses) of respondents reported that they use funded early learning and childcare to work, whilst 78.7% (74 responses) use it for their child’s learning and development. 37.2% (35 responses) use funded hours to reduce having to rely on family and friends for childcare, whilst 27.7% (26 responses) reported that they have no other childcare options. 16% use the hours for personal time. This implies that funded hours allows for an increased ability for parents and carers to work.

What are your main reasons for using funded ELC? Please select all that apply:

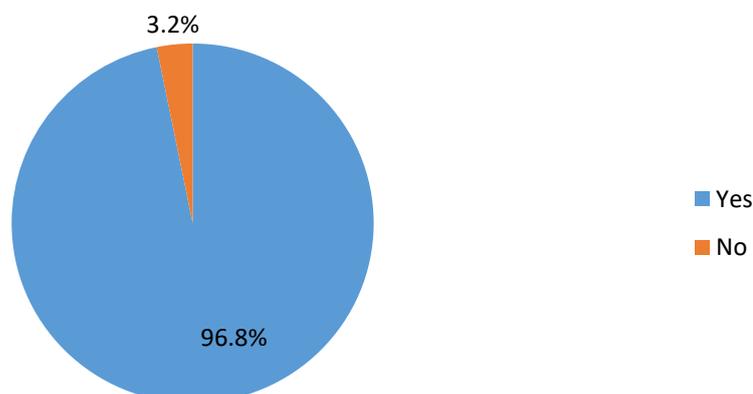


### Question 10

**Has having access to the provision of funded early learning and childcare had a positive effect on your family/family circumstances? (e.g. more money/disposable income, consideration of a return to work or study, more time for other responsibilities, improved wellbeing/respite etc)**

96.8% of parents and carers (91 responses) reported that access to funded early learning and childcare has had a positive effect on their family circumstances.

Has having access to the provision of funded ELC had a positive effect on your family/family circumstances?



Question 11

**If you answered no, are there any reasons why?**

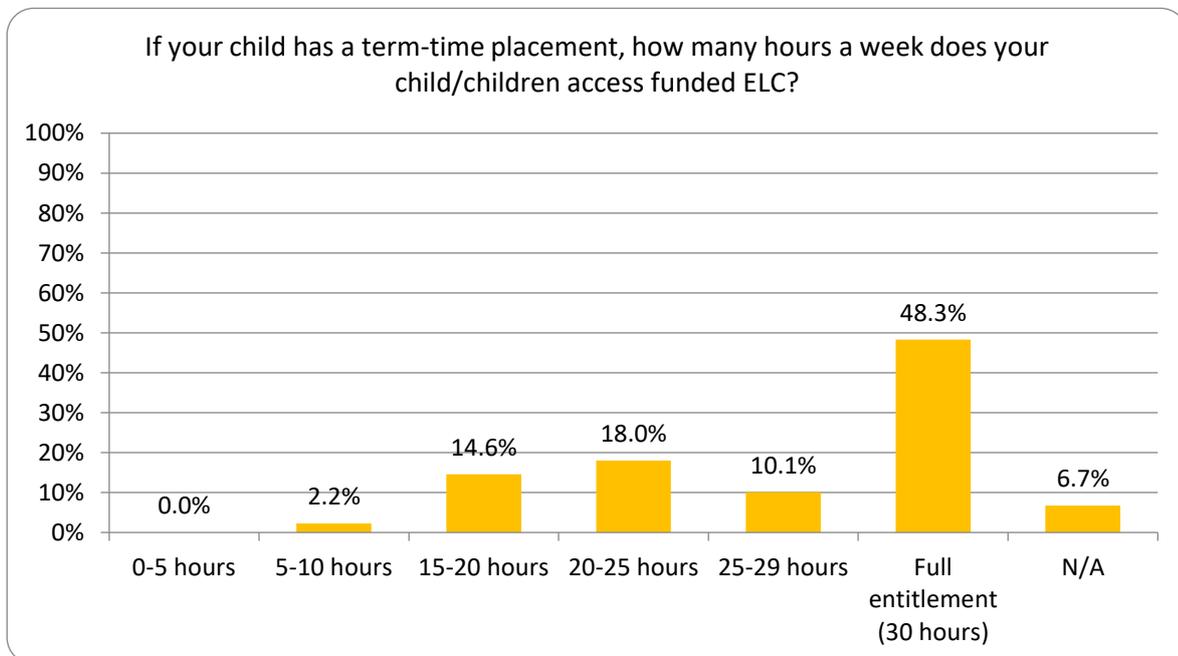
This question was answered by one respondent that stated:

*“It has made no difference as I am a stay at home mam. I can’t afford to go to work as I would have to pay for childcare for my youngest who is 2 which would make working pointless. I would rather look after my children than pay others to”.*

Question 12

**If your child has a term-time placement, how many hours a week does your child/children access funded early learning and childcare?**

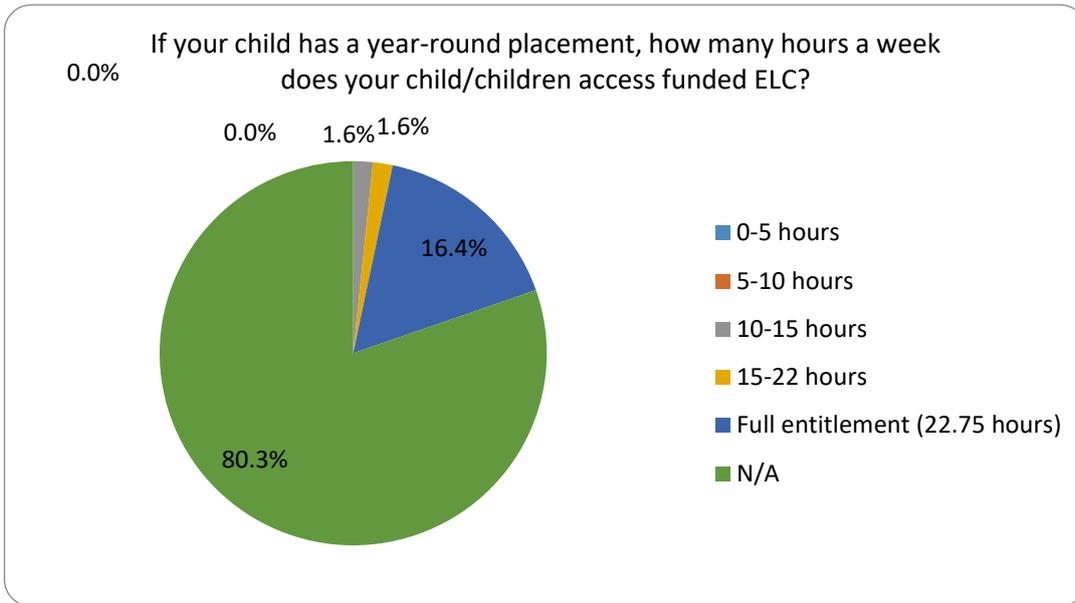
This question received 89 responses. 48.3% (43 responses) of children on a term-time placement use their full entitlement of 30 hours a week. A further 18% (16 responses) use 20-25 hours a week and 14.6% (13 responses) use 15-20 hours.



Question 13

**If your child has a year-round placement, how many hours a week does your child/children access funded early learning and childcare?**

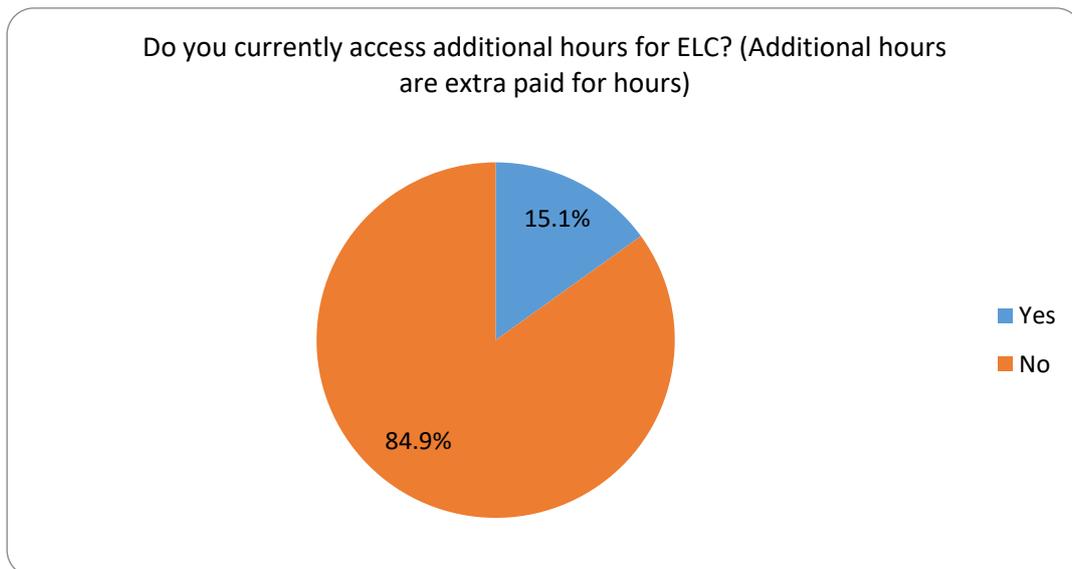
This question received 61 responses. 80.3% answered this question with 'Not Applicable'. 16.4% of parents and carers stated that they use their full entitlement of 22.75 hours a week.



Question 14

**Do you currently access additional hours for early learning and childcare? (Additional hours are extra paid for hours)**

85% of parents and carers in Shetland do not access additional hours for early learning and childcare, while 15.1% do.



### Question 15

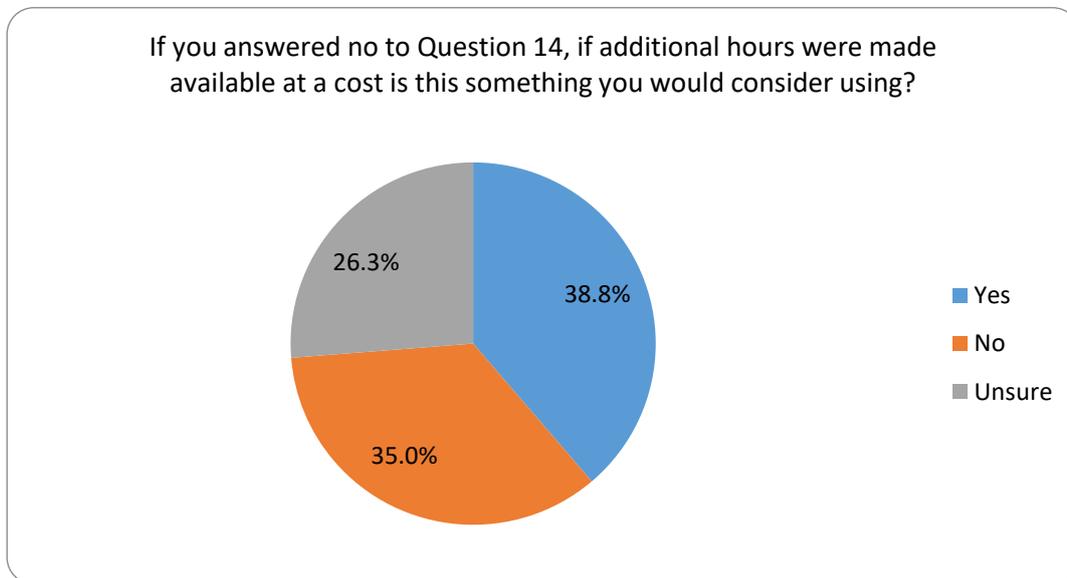
**If you answered yes, how many additional hours of early learning and childcare does your child/children access?**

This question received 14 responses. Of these, 4 reported that they use between 3-4 hours per week, 1 uses 6 hours, and a further 3 parents and carers use between 8-10 hours. One response reported that they use 15 hours per week. 2 responses use additional hours on an ad hoc basis.

### Question 16

**If you answered no to Question 14, if additional hours were made available at a cost is this something you would consider using?**

Of the 80 responses, 38.8% of respondents (31 responses) reported that they would pay for additional hours while 35% (28 responses) reported that they would not. A further 26.3% (21 responses) were unsure.

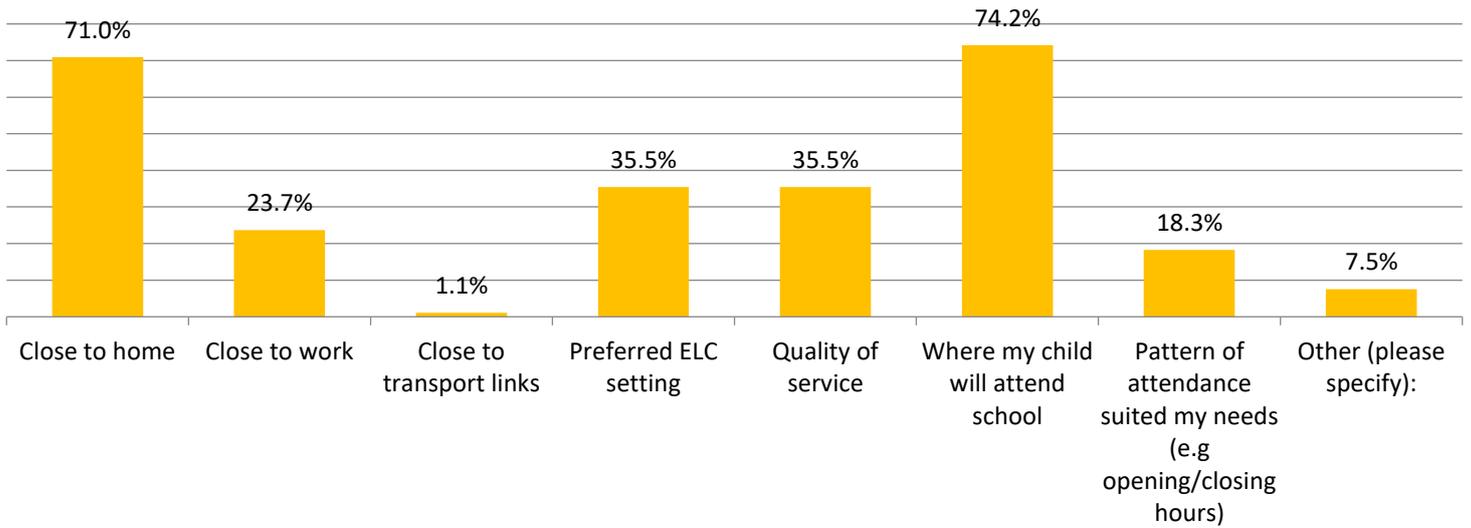


### Question 17

**Why did you choose to register your child/children at your chosen early learning and childcare setting? Please select all that apply:**

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. 74.2% of respondents reported that they chose their setting because it was where their child will attend school, while 71% reported that it was because it was close to home. Quality of service (35.5%) and preferred early learning and childcare setting (35.5%) were also common factors.

Why did you choose to register your child/children at your chosen ELC setting? Please select all that apply:

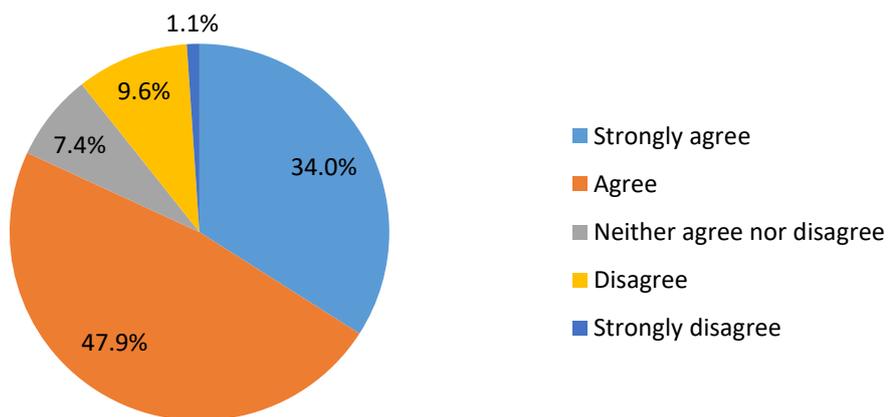


**Question 18**

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

81.9% (77 responses) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their current early learning and childcare offer was meeting their needs. 10.7% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. 7.4% neither agreed nor disagreed.

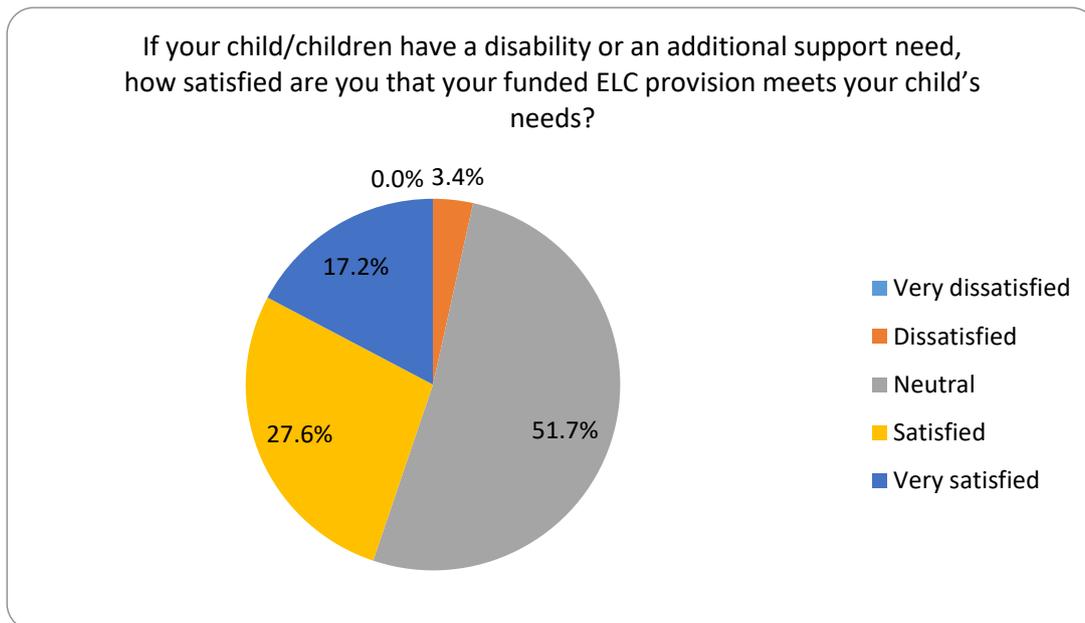
To what extent do you agree with the following statement? 'The current funded ELC offer meets my family's needs.'



### Question 19

**If your child/children have a disability or an additional support need, how satisfied are you that your funded early learning and childcare provision meets your child's needs?**

Of the 29 responses, 51.7% (15 responses) reported that they were neutral about their current early learning and childcare provider meeting their child's needs. 44.8% (13 responses) of parents and carers with a child with a disability or additional support need reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with their early learning and childcare setting, while 1 respondent was dissatisfied.

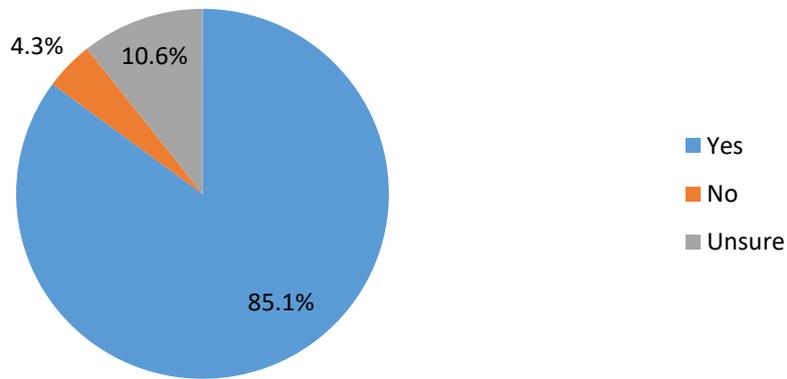


### Question 20

**Are you satisfied with the quality of provision within your funded early learning and childcare provider?**

85.1% (80 responses) of parents and carers reported that they are satisfied with the quality of provision of their funded early learning and childcare provider. 4.3% (4 responses) reported that they are not satisfied, and the 10.6% (10 responses) that were unsure.

Are you satisfied with the quality of provision within your funded ELC provider?

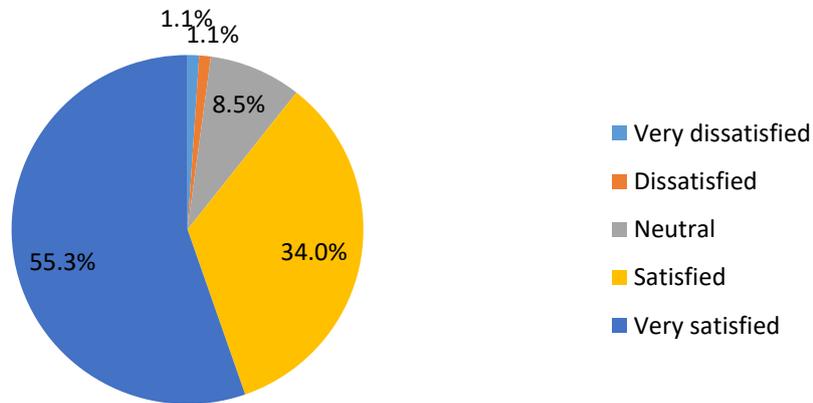


Question 21

**Are you satisfied with the opportunities your child/children have to play outside?**

89.3% (81 responses) of parents and carers are either very satisfied or satisfied with the outside play opportunities for their child/children. 8.5% (8 responses) of respondents are neutral, while 2.2% (2 responses) reported to being either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied about the outside play opportunities.

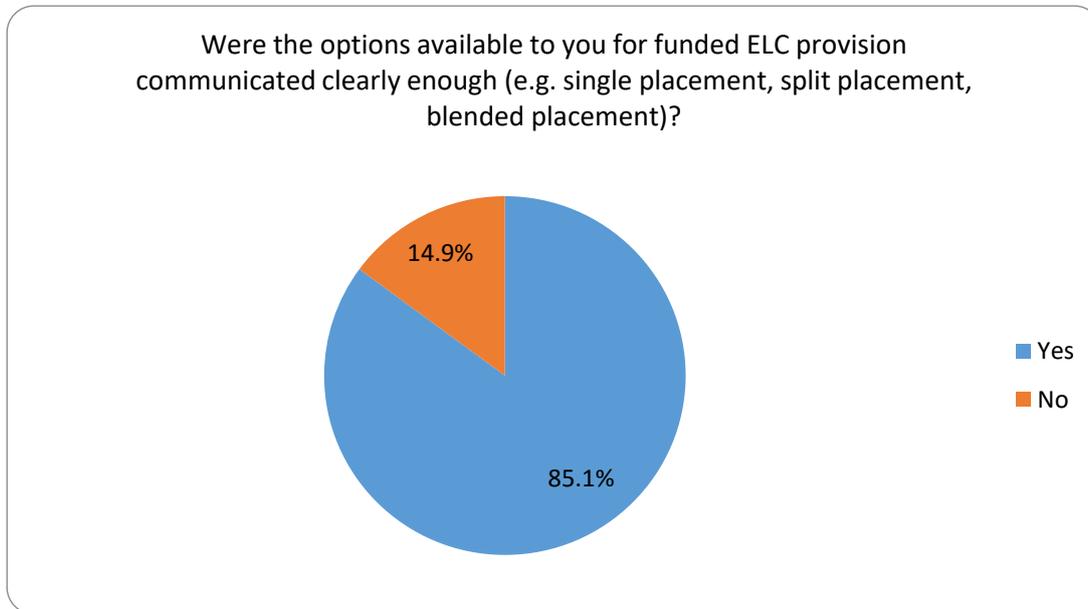
Are you satisfied with the opportunities your child/children have to play outside?



Question 22

**Were the options available to you for funded early learning and childcare provision communicated clearly enough (e.g. single placement, split placement, blended placement)?**

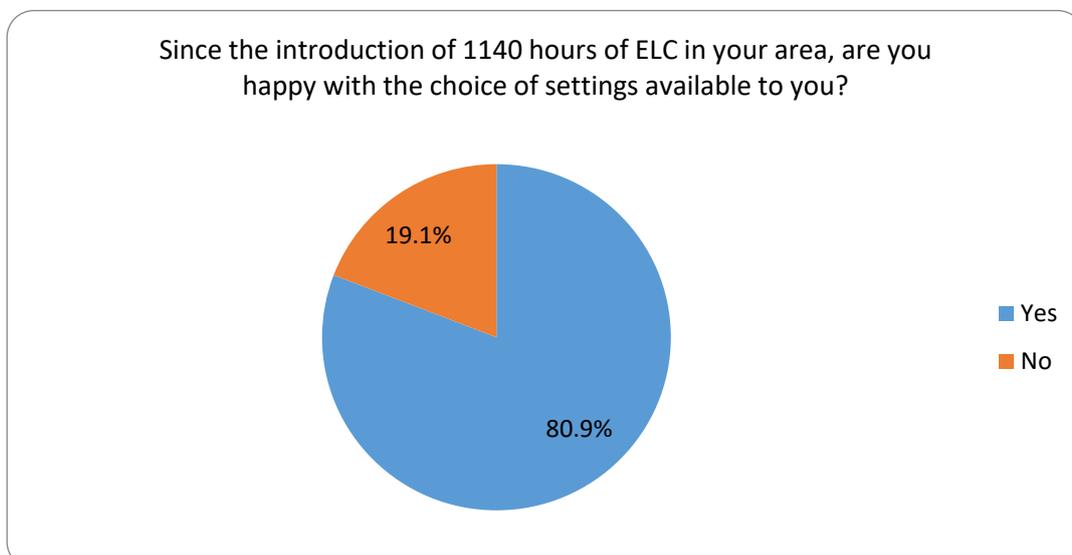
85.1% (80 responses) of respondents reported that the options for funded early learning and childcare were clear. 14.9% (14 responses) of parents and carers reported that they were not clear.



Question 23

**Since the introduction of 1140 hours of 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)?**

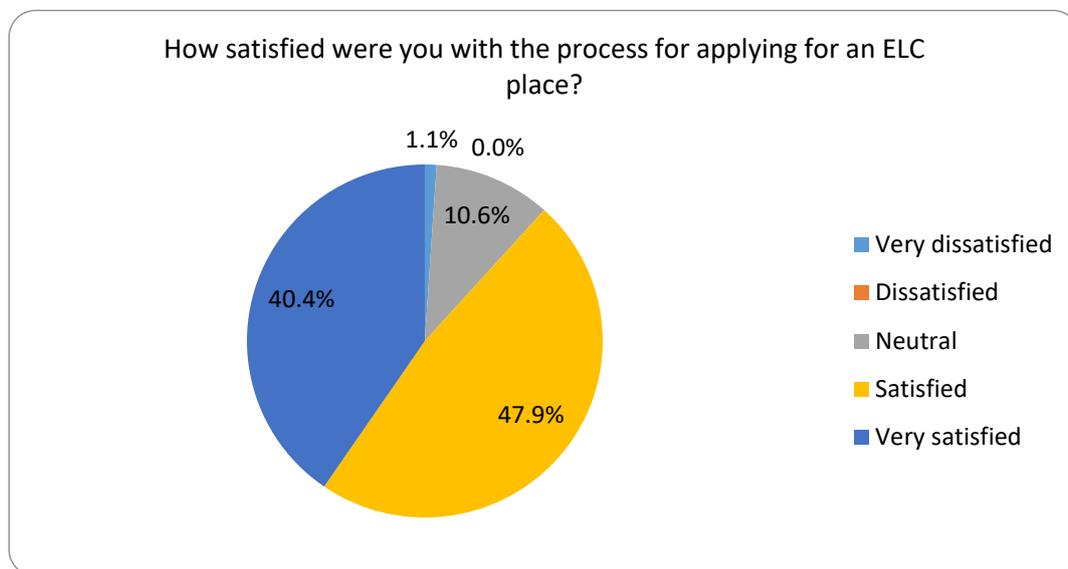
Of the 94 responses, 80.9% of respondents (76 responses) reported that they were happy with the choice of early learning and childcare settings available to them, while 19.1% (18 responses) were not happy.



## Question 24

### **How satisfied were you with the process for applying for an early learning and childcare place?**

88.3% (83 responses) of parents and carers were either very satisfied or satisfied with the process for applying for an early learning and childcare place. 1.1% (1 response) were very dissatisfied, and 10.6% (10 responses) of parents and carers were neutral.



## Question 25

### **If there are any barriers to you currently accessing funded early learning and childcare please give details below:**

This question received 2 responses. One comment reported that the Skeld early learning and childcare setting not being open until 3pm is a barrier. 1 response reported that an extra half hour a day would assist them to work.

## Question 26

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

This question was answered by 14 parents and carers. Of these, a common theme was parents and carers using this question to praise their current setting, showing gratitude for the funded hours entitlement (5 responses). Other themes to arise were around insufficient opening times (4 responses), particularly holiday provision and for working parents. 1 response reported the lack of flexibility while 1 response was interested in funding from an earlier age. 1 response was interested in paying for additional hours. 1 response was unhappy with their setting.

The following comments are noted:

- *I just wish there was an option to pay for extra time as it does restrict me with the hours I can take on at work.*
- *Would be nice to get 30 hours all year round, not just term time as we then need to pay for childcare in the holidays.*
- *It would be beneficial if working parents could access funded places from an earlier age.*

- *Funded early learning and childcare achieves what it's intended to do: enhance paid employment prospects for primary carers. We feel very fortunate to be recipients of this Scottish provision.*

### **Summary of Main Findings from Section A (Early Learning and Childcare)**

- 60.6% of parents and carers use their full entitlement of 1140 funded hours. In 2021, 42.9% of respondents were using their full entitlement.
- 85.1% of parents and carers are satisfied with the quality of provision of their funded early learning and childcare provider. 81.9% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their current setting offer was effectively meeting their needs. Therefore, Shetland has a high satisfaction rate from parents and carers in regards to the quality of provision of early learning and childcare.
- 96.8% of parents and carers reported that access to funded early learning and childcare has had a positive effect on their family circumstances
- 80.9% parents and carers use their funded hours to work, whilst 78.7% use it to enhance their child's learning and development. This suggests that the funded hours are supporting parents into employment.
- 51.7% of parents and carers with a child with a disability and/or an additional support need reported that they were neutral about their current early learning and childcare provider meeting their child's needs.
- 15% of parents and carers are currently accessing additional hours for early learning and childcare. 38.8% reported that they would pay for additional hours if they were available. 26.3% were unsure.

## Section B: 0-2 Year Old Childcare

Section B is centred on childcare for children aged 0-2. This section examines current childcare facilities in Shetland for this age range, assesses whether this provision does enough to meet the needs of parents and carers, and aims to see where services may need to be developed in the future.

This section received 147 responses. A section on childcare for children aged 0-2 years old has been included due to anecdotal evidence indicating that limited childcare for this age group is having an impact on families.

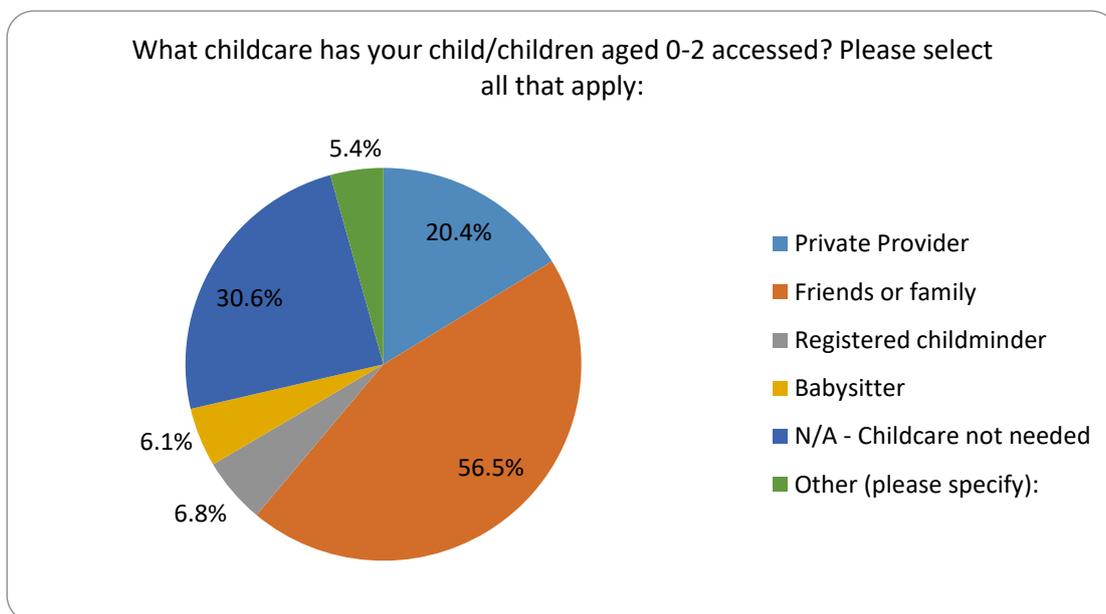
Furthermore, in the 2022 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government committed to conducting research and engagement to inform the development of provision for 1- and 2-year-olds.

### Question 28

#### **What childcare has your child/children aged 0-2 accessed? Please select all that apply:**

56.5% (83 responses) of parents and carers in Shetland use friends or family as a form of childcare for their 0-2-year old child/children. 30.6% reported that childcare was not needed (45 responses), while 20.4% (30 responses) use a private provider. 6.8% (10 responses) of parents and carers use a registered childminder, while 6.1% (9 responses) use a babysitter.

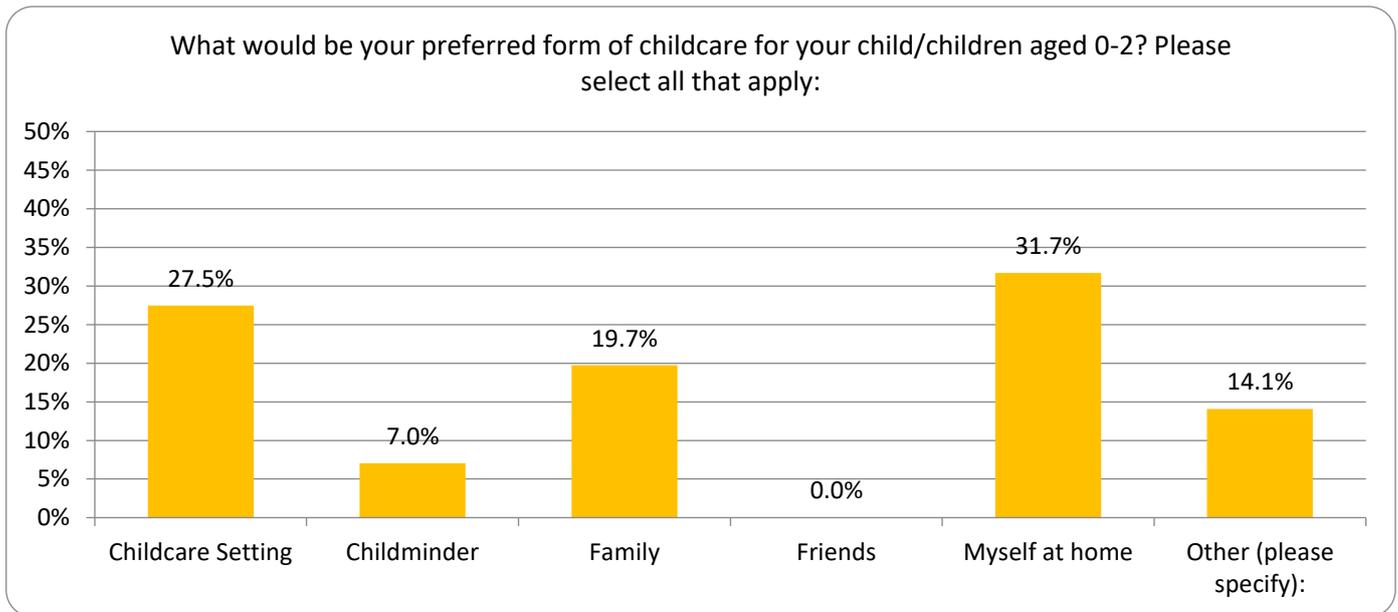
Of those that selected 'other' reported that there was no childcare available, had a new-born at home, were on maternity leave, or their partner took time off work.



### Question 29

**What would be your preferred form of childcare for your child/children aged 0-2? Please select all that apply:**

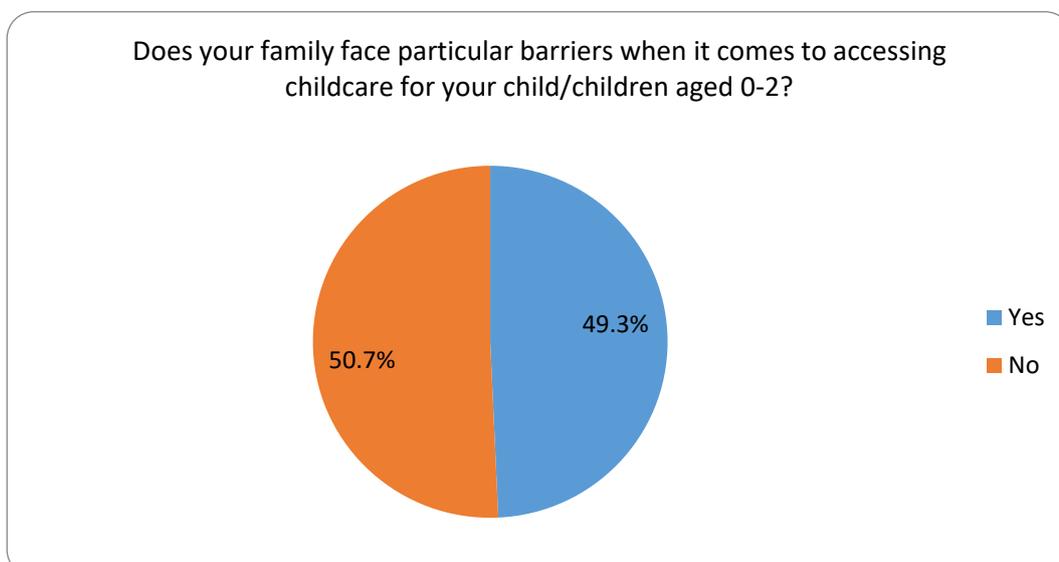
31.7% (45 responses) of parents and carers reported that they would prefer to stay at home with their child/children aged 0-2. A further 27.5% (39 responses) would prefer to put their child in a childcare setting while 19.7% preferred to use family as childcare. 7% (10 responses) selected the childminder option. Of the 14.1% (20 responses) that selected 'other', the majority reported that they would ideally prefer a combination of the options listed.



### Question 30

**Does your family face particular barriers when it comes to accessing childcare for your child/children aged 0-2?**

49.3% (68 responses) of parents and carers face barriers when accessing childcare for their 0-2 year-old, while 50.7% (70 responses) do not face barriers.



### Question 31

#### **If yes, please provide further information here:**

This question received 67 responses and a wide-range of topics were covered. From the answers provided, the most common barrier to accessing childcare for 0-2 year olds is the lack of provision available in local areas (33 responses). This is particularly difficult for working families. Affordability of childcare (15 responses), barriers to employment (12 responses) and struggling to find family/friends to rely on (9 responses) were also reported as recurring issues to accessing childcare for 0-2 years. It was regularly reported that these barriers cause high levels of stress for families. 8 responses reported limited spaces at their local provision as a barrier, while 7 responses reported a lack of childminders available.

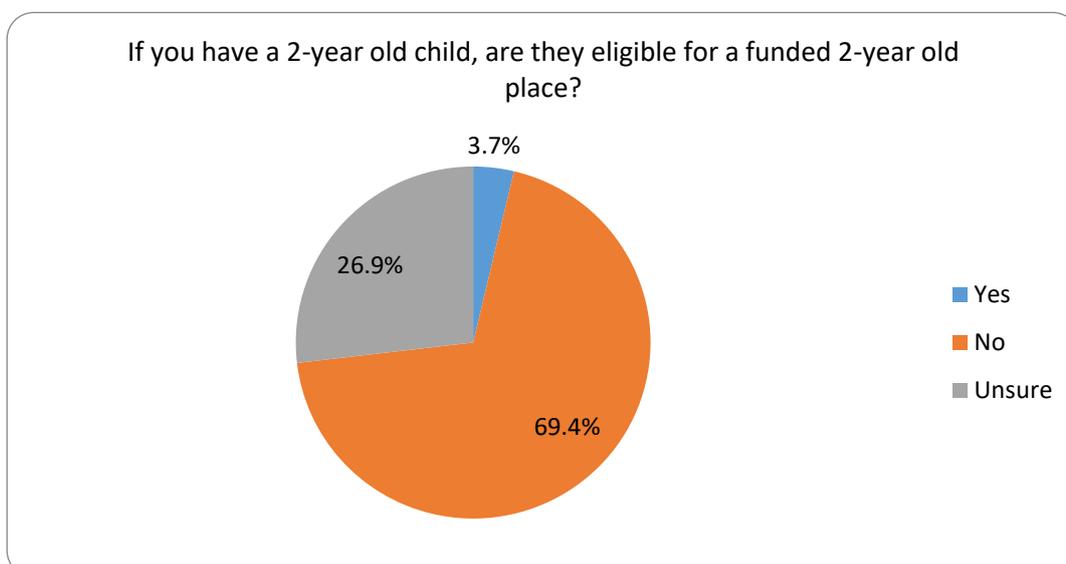
The following comments are noted:

- *The barrier is simply availability of service - there aren't any childcare options aside from friends/family (which we are very lucky to have, but cannot always assume will be available).*
- *There is neither childminders nor childcare settings in Yell so work is not an option until my children start school or nursery and even then could only work within nursery hours.*
- *There is nothing on this islands for 0-3 yrs old unless your child is entitled to a place. The past few months have been extremely difficult for us, there has been no 2 yr old in the early learning dept, yet we are still not allowed to pay for a place. We have to rely on family and even then we find we are having to take days off work as family can't commit to childcare.*
- *Shortage of registered child minders in local area.*
- *Cost is a factor for every family, but availability of daycare spaces in existing settings for under 2's is limited due to their greater level of need.*

### Question 32

#### **If you have a 2-year old child, are they eligible for a funded 2-year old place?**

3.7% (4 responses) of respondents had a child that was eligible for a funded 2-year old place. 69.4% (75 responses) reported that they did not have a 2 year old that was eligible, while 26.9% (29 responses) of parents and carers were unsure.

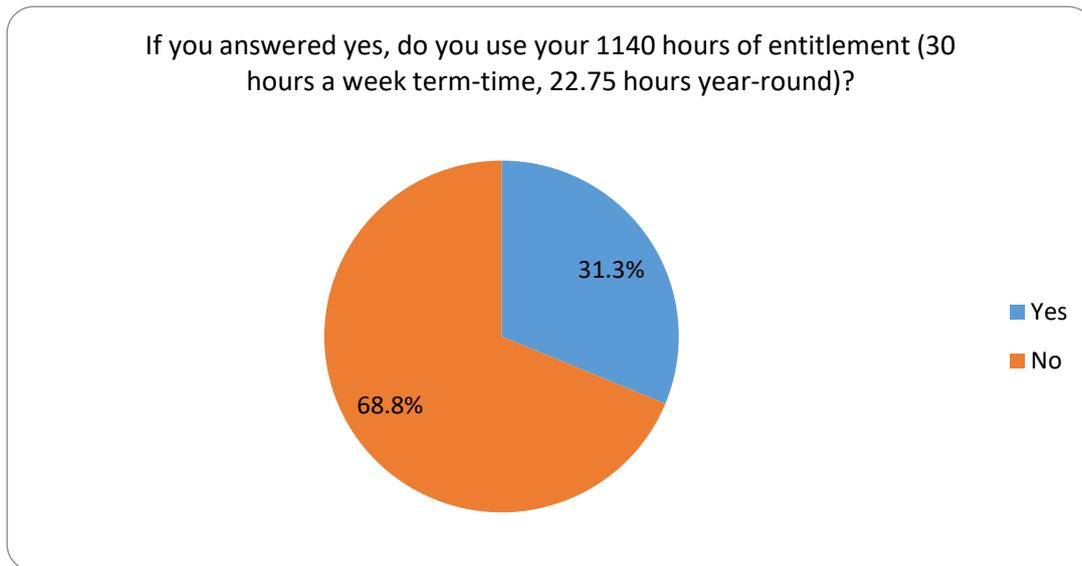


### Question 33

**If you answered yes, do you use your 1140 hours of entitlement (30 hours a week term-time, 22.75 hours year-round)?**

Following question 32, it should be noted this question should have received 4 responses however, this question was answered by 16 respondents. This indicates that the data from this question may be inaccurate.

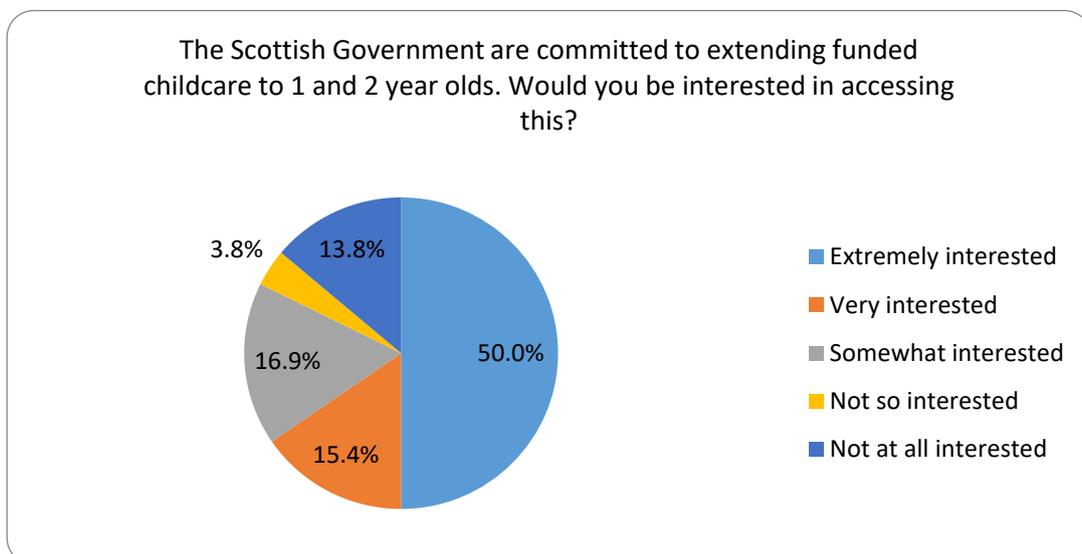
Of the 16 respondents, 31.2% (5 responses) reported that they use their full entitlement of 1140 hours, while 68.8% (11 responses) reported that they do not.



### Question 34

**The Scottish Government are committed to extending funded childcare to 1 and 2 year olds. Would you be interested in accessing this?**

65.4% (85 responses) of parents and carers reported to being extremely interested or very interested in funded childcare for 1 and 2 year olds. 17.6% (23 responses) were not so interested or not at all interested.



### Question 35

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

This question received a high response rate, with 81 answers provided.

44 responses reported that an increase in the number of local childcare options would better meet their needs, with many reporting this would help with work opportunities. Funded placements for 1 and 2 year olds (15 responses) and help with costs (10 responses) were common themes, as well as a need for an increase in local childminders (14 responses). 6 responses reported they would benefit from wrap-around childcare while 4 responses reported that they would benefit from an increase in flexible provision. 1 response reported the importance for “continued commitment to enhancing the pay, training and status of nursery staff”, while another response was interested in a “local pay offer to support parents to stay at home to care for child”.

The following comments are noted:

- *Longer opening hours till 6pm and funded placement for 1 and 2 year old 5 days per week in term time fully funded.*
- *As there is currently no provision of childcare in the north isles, then the obvious answer is to provide childcare in an appropriate setting with qualified childcare professionals.*
- *Cost should be managed for all families. Living in more rural areas mean costs are higher for all things. This should be reflected in costs incurred.*
- *Childcare options on the Westside, ideally connected to the Aith school or West mainland Leisure centre as many already go there for after-school clubs as is.*
- *If we did not have grandparents, funded childcare from 1-3years would be needed. And more childminders.*
- *Funded childcare to all and not just those that earn less than a certain amount. We only just earn more and it's borderline to whether or not it is worth one of us working.*
- *More options for childcare from 1 year onwards, more funded places/for under 3 year olds.*
- *The first change would be to get some local childcare provision.*
- *Extending funded childcare to 1 and 2 year olds, alongside a drive to incentivise childminding and less formal forms of childcare such as nannying etc. in the isles.*
- *Specific childcare setting for 0-2yr olds.*
- *More help for people to set up as childminders in the area.*

### Question 36

#### **Are there any comments you wish to add in relation to childcare for 0-2 year olds in your area?**

This question received a total of 44 responses. The most common theme was the lack of provision in local areas (25 responses) with a number of responses reporting being on waiting lists as the current provisions are at full capacity. 8 responses reported the strains that the lack of provision has on their work, 3 responses reported the high costs of childcare, while another 3 responses would benefit from increased flexibility. 2 responses were interested in funding to stay at home with their children.

The following comments are noted:

- *I strongly believe investing money into better maternity and paternity schemes and allowing parents to be home longer is the answer, not forcing parents to put their babies in the care of strangers.*
- *There is nothing to my knowledge available in the area should I need it and it is vital if parents and carers need to use it.*
- *The childcare in our area for 0-2 year olds is zero. Without the help of family I would not be able to return to work which is difficult in this current climate. I want to work to help support my family however I am unsure how long that will be sustainable for as for lack of childcare in the area. Staying on the west mainland, the closest childcare we would have is Lerwick or Scalloway for this age which doesn't work for us as a family as we both work on the west side too.*
- *We need more small home-based care settings so our children can receive the same level of attention and care they would from their own families.*
- *There is no available option for us currently for childcare apart from asking friends and family to help out on a regular basis.*
- *There is zero childcare in my immediate area.*

### **Summary of Main Findings from Section B: 0-2 Year Old Childcare**

- 32% of parents and carers reported that they would prefer to stay at home with their child/children aged 0-2. 27.5% would prefer to put their child in a childcare setting, while 7% were interested in the childminder option.
- 49.3% of parents and carers face barriers when accessing childcare for their 0-2 year-old.
- 65.4% of parents and carers expressed that they were extremely or very interested in funded childcare for 1 and 2 year olds.
- At the time of the survey, parents and carers reported there was limited or no options for formal childcare for 0-2 year olds. This suggests there is a further need for affordable childcare for this age group. There were numerous responses noting that the lack of provision was limiting their ability to work and earn money.

## Section C: School-Aged Childcare

Section C 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 and carers, and aims to see where services may need to be developed in the future. This section received a high response rate, with 227 responses in total.

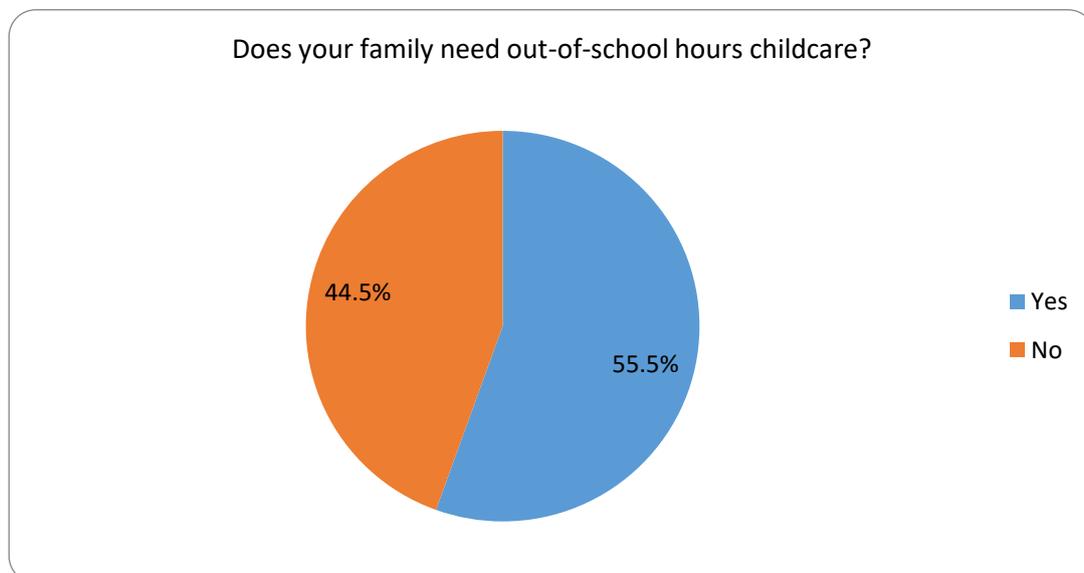
A section on school-aged childcare has been included due to anecdotal evidence indicating that limited childcare for this age group is having an impact on families.

The Scottish Government's Early Learning and School Age Childcare Strategic Plan sets out a commitment to build a system of school age childcare for all primary school children. The Plan also recognises that many rural and island communities face specific challenges and barriers to designing and delivering a year-round system of school age childcare. 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 38

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

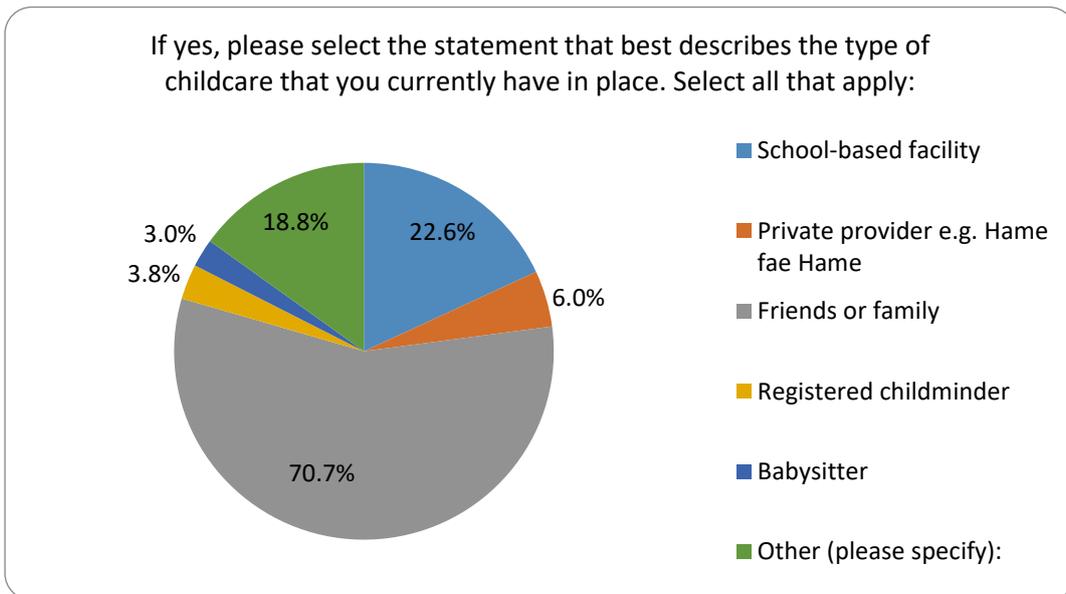
55.5% (126 responses) reported that they require out-of-school childcare provision. This is compared to 44.5% (101 responses) of parents and carers who stated that they do not need this type of provision.



Question 39

**If yes, please select the statement that best describes the type of childcare that you currently have in place. Select all that apply:**

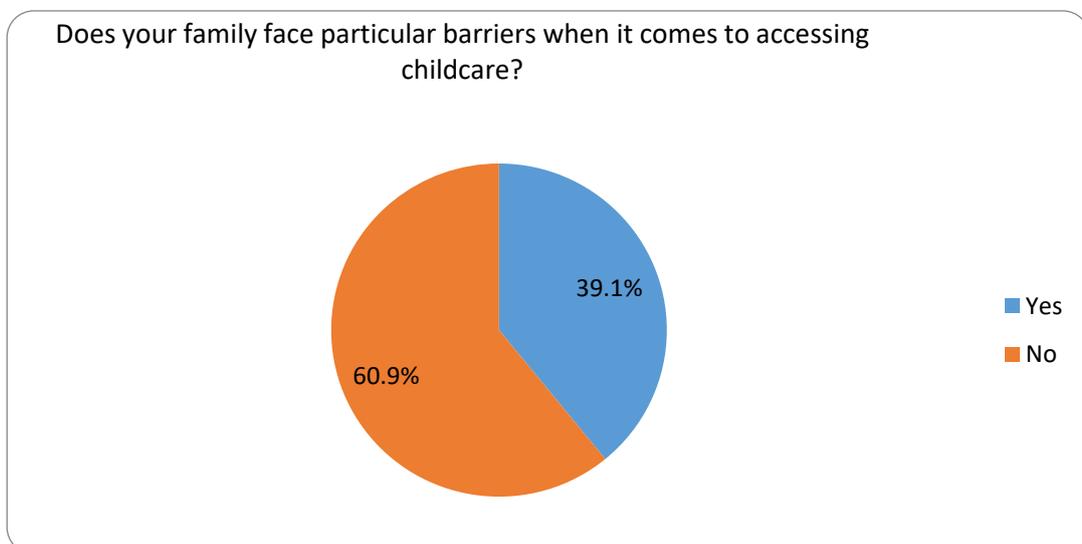
70.7% (94 responses) of respondents reported using friends or family for school-aged childcare. 3.8% (5 responses) use a registered childminder, 6% (8 responses) use a private provider and 22.6% (30 responses) use a school-based facility. In 2021, 11.9% of parents stated to using a school-based facility, and 75% relied on friends or family for childcare. Of those who selected 'other', the respondents access a council-run out of school club or leisure centre clubs/activities.



Question 40

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

This question was answered by 220 respondents. 60.9% (134 responses) of parents and carers reported that they do not face any particular barriers when accessing school-aged childcare. 39.1% (86 responses) reported that they do face barriers. In 2021, 45.4% of parents and carers faced barriers when accessing school-aged childcare.



## Question 41

### **If yes, please provide further information here:**

This question received 84 responses. From the answers provided, the most common barrier to accessing school-aged childcare is the lack of provision available in local areas. 50% (42 responses) of those who answered this question reported that the lack of choice of provision was a significant barrier, particularly for working families.

Affordability (13 responses), and struggling to find family/friends to rely on (10 responses) were also recurring barriers to accessing school-aged childcare. A number of responses reported that these particular barriers cause high levels of stress for their family. 8 responses reported a lack of breakfast clubs, while 10 responses reported limited after-school provision. 6 responses reported that their child had an additional support need, 3 responses reported the difficulty in working shift patterns, while another 3 responses reported a lack of quality.

The following comments are noted:

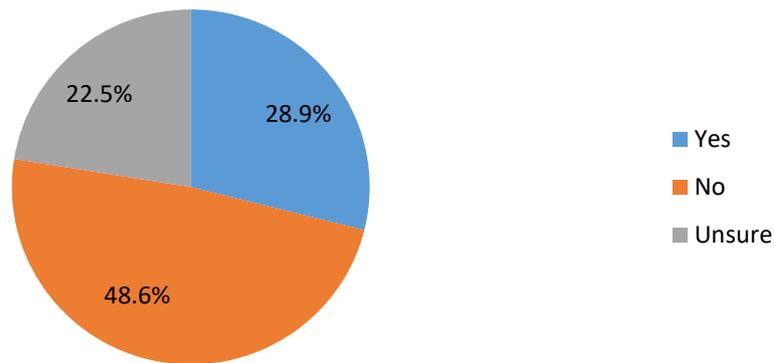
- *3 children school age, care is too expensive.*
- *No available friends or family, no local affordable out of hours care.*
- *There is nothing available to families out west / all facilities are centred around Lerwick.*
- *There is none in our area and taking time out of the working day to transport them to another area just adds time to the working day - meaning less time with my kids.*
- *Without having a family member, there is no childcare available for after school meaning I am unable to work full time.*
- *The out of school club does not cater for early learning and childcare age children so it only suits one of my children.*
- *There's no child care in the north isles at all.*
- *There's a huge shortage of childcare options in Yell. During holidays / outside of school hours there's simply nothing available.*

## Question 42

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

48.6% (106 responses) reported that their community does not have access to sufficient school-aged childcare that meets their needs. 22.5% (49 responses) of respondents were unsure, while 28.9% (63 responses) reported that there is sufficient school-aged childcare in their area.

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

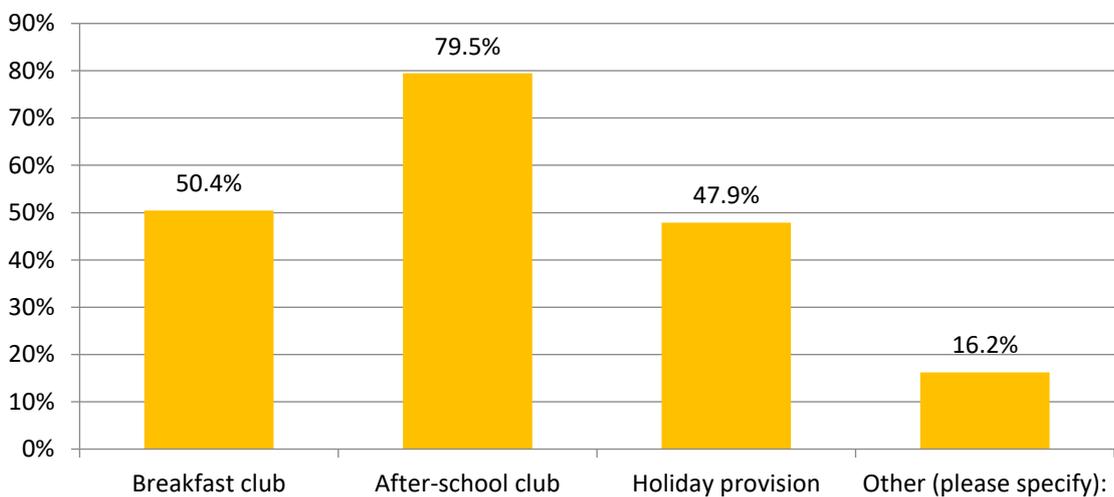


### Question 43

**If you answered no, what type of school-aged provision would suit your family's needs? Please select all that apply:**

79.5% (93 responses) of respondents reported that having access to an after-school club would better meet their family needs. 50.4% (59 responses) would benefit from a breakfast club, while 47.9% (56 responses) would benefit from holiday provision.

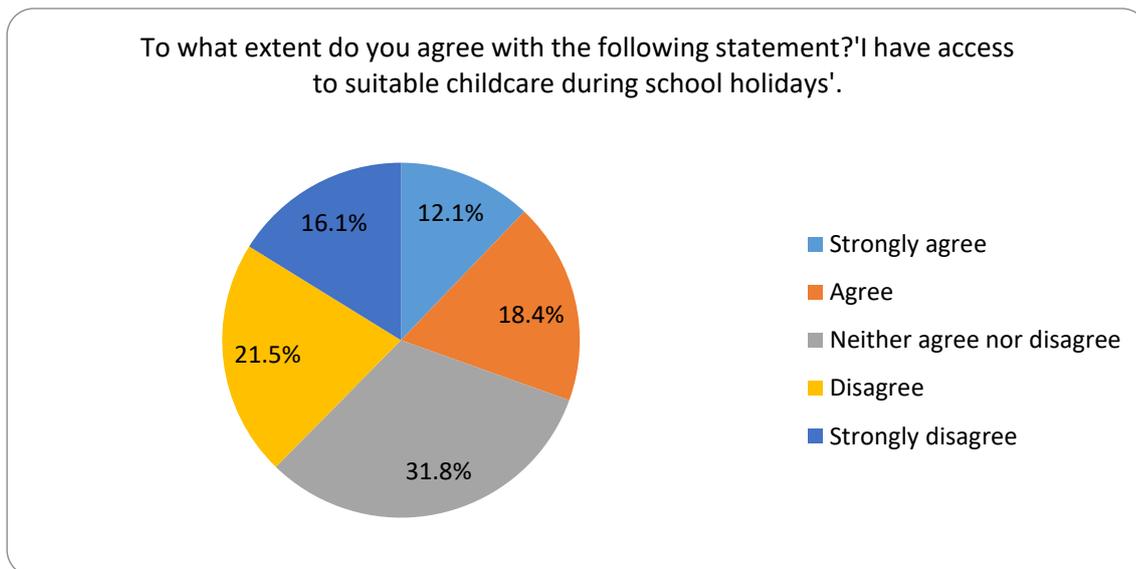
If you answered no, what type of school-aged provision would suit your family's needs? Please select all that apply:



Question 44

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

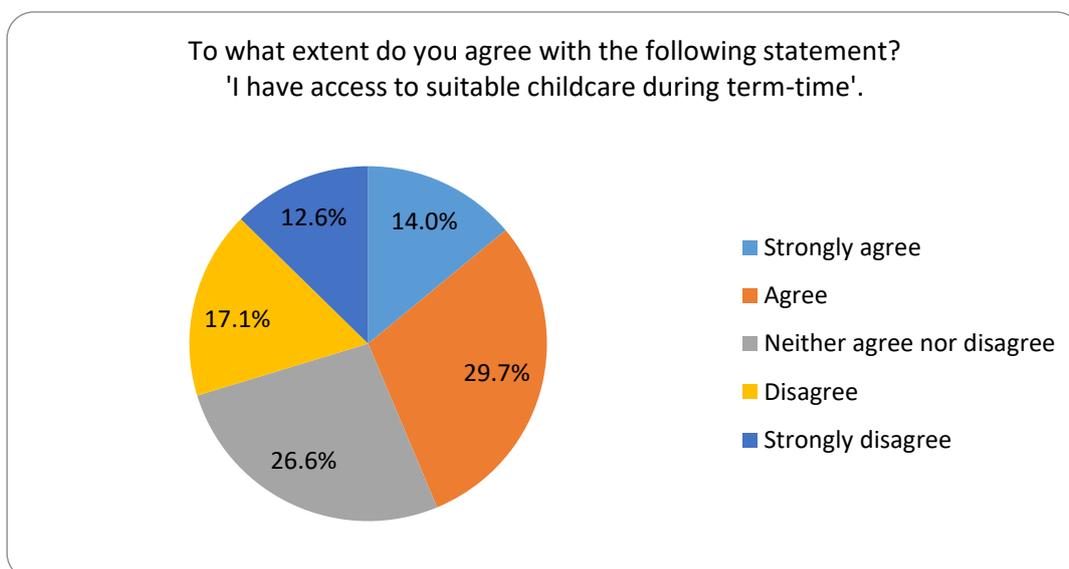
37.6% (84 responses) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they can access school-aged childcare during school holidays, while 31.8% (71 responses) neither agreed nor disagreed. 30.5% (68 responses) of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had suitable holiday provision.



Question 45

**To what extent do you agree with the following statement? 'I have access to suitable childcare during term-time'.**

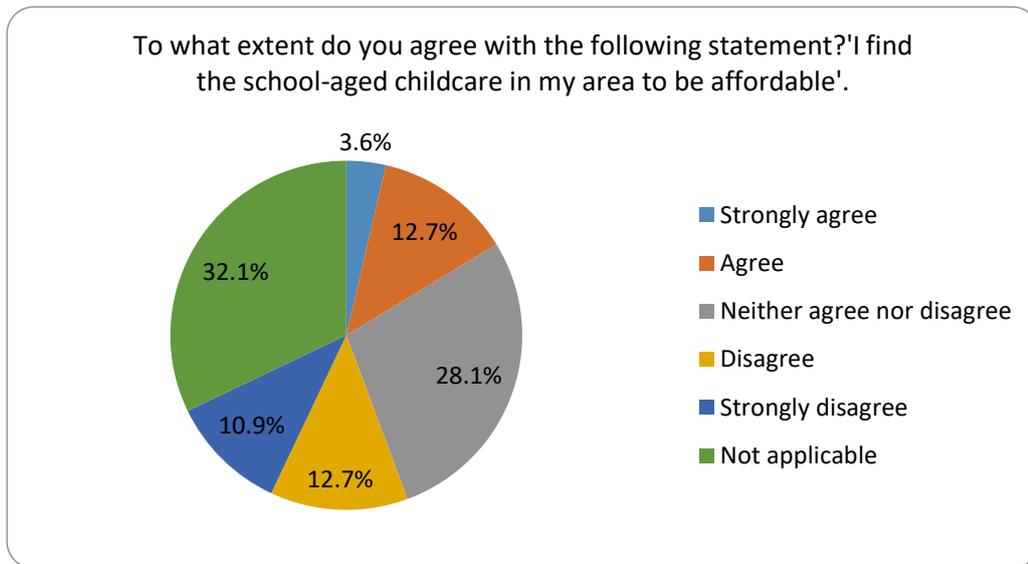
29.7% (64 responses) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they can access school-aged childcare during term-time, while 26.6% (59 responses) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. 43.7% (97 responses) of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had suitable holiday provision.



Question 46

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

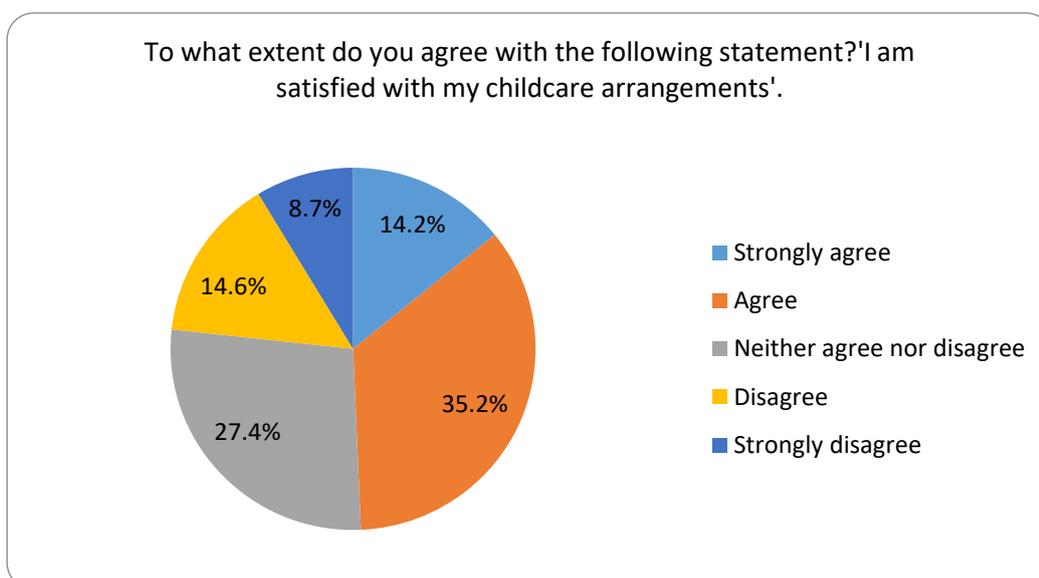
16.3% (36 responses) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they found school-aged childcare to be affordable, while 23.6% (52 responses) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. 32.1% (71 responses) of respondents chose to answer with 'not applicable', while 28.1% (62 responses) neither agreed nor disagreed.



Question 47

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

46.4% (108 responses) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their school-aged childcare arrangements. 23.3% (51 responses) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 27.4% (60 responses) neither agreed nor disagreed.



## Question 48

### **Are there any comments you wish to add in relation to school-aged childcare in your area?**

The question received 70 responses. The most common theme to arise was the lack of access to out-of-school childcare in local communities (30 responses). Responses reported needing an increase in after-school provision (7 responses), school holiday provision (11 responses) and breakfast club provision (4 responses).

9 responses reported relying on family/friends for childcare, while another theme to arise was the childcare difficulties for those who do not have family/friends in Shetland.

8 responses reported the negative impact that a lack of accessible school-aged childcare has on employment opportunities. A number of respondents reported that they do not work at all due to lack of provision.

5 responses suggested that rural areas should be better supported in regards to childcare, while 3 responses reported needing flexible provision, in particular to enable parents to work for a full day. Affordability concerns (10 responses) were also reported. 4 responses used this question to praise their current childcare facility.

The following comments are noted:

- *One child is easy to organise, multiple children make it unaffordable.*
- *Definitely an acute need on the West Mainland, as previously suggested in connection to Aith School / WMLC would be really handy and tie in with after school clubs already.*
- *Holiday club not on all of the holidays and quite expensive if you have more than one child.*
- *Really appreciate the days the out of school club is open in the holidays but struggle being limited to 4 days open in 2 weeks off school, or 8 days during the 6/7 weeks in the summer. Often means booking in at Scalloway, with cost of fuel up and down on top of childcare prices, which becomes almost more expensive to be at work than it is to be off.*
- *I wish I had a childcare provision to comment about, as that way there would be something to build on and develop.*

### **Summary of Main Findings of Section C: School-Aged Childcare**

- 71% of parents and carers rely on informal networks such as family and friends for childcare. 23% of parents and carers use a service within a school.
- 48.6% of parents and carers stated that access to school-aged childcare in Shetland is not sufficiently meeting their family needs. In 2021, 52% of parents and carers reported that their needs were not being met.
- 39% of all parents and carers reported that they face barriers when accessing school-aged childcare.
- A number of respondents reported that there is a need for an increase in the number of out-of-school childcare options in their local areas. Parents and carers reported that the lack of childcare is impacting on their ability to work and causing other challenges.
- A number of parents and carers reported that school-aged childcare is unaffordable.

## Question 49

### **What is important to you in regards to childcare?**

This question received a total of 213 responses. The most important factors to parents in regards to childcare is ensuring that their child is safe in the setting (79 responses) and that they are happy and comfortable (43 responses). Parents and carers reported that it is important for staff to be caring and supportive while also being competent and trustworthy, with a number of responses hoping that staff would build positive relationships with their child.

39 responses reported on the environment of their chosen setting, and how it should be nurturing, welcoming and kind, whilst also meeting the needs of individual children. A number of responses reported that it is important to have a variety of activities and resources available.

Other common themes to arise were having affordable childcare (43 responses), and childcare provision that promotes continuous learning and development (27 responses). Accessible childcare is also important to parents and carers (39 responses), in particular having childcare facilities that are located within local areas and that is open during times that allows for parents to easily work. 24 responses reported that flexible childcare is important to allow for changing needs.

Provision that is of a high quality (16 responses), reliable and consistent (13 responses) and having access to the outdoors (11 responses) are important to families. Nutritious snack and meal options (8 responses) were also reported, while another 7 responses reported that a good level of communication from their childcare setting is important.

## Question 50

### **Please use this space for any final comments / feedback you would like to provide.**

This question received a total of 55 responses and was skipped by 241 respondents.

The most common themes to arise were the negative impacts that a lack of childcare has on a parent and carer's ability to work (10 responses), praise given to current childcare facilities and staff (8 responses), and the need for more wraparound childcare across Shetland (7 responses). It was reported that further childcare is needed in the North Isles (4 responses), West Mainland (2 responses) and the South Mainland (2 responses).

Developing provision out with the centralised areas (7 responses) and the importance of affordable services (5 responses) were also reported. 2 responses were interested in getting funding to stay at home with their young child.

The following comments are noted:

- *Afterschool clubs is something I would really like to see in all school catchment area.*
- *I feel if you work and earn a wage you are then put in a position where you struggle to find a workable solution for childcare if your children are in different age groups. There is no real support for families that earn over a certain amount and are just expected to manage to pay for childcare when others would maybe get it for free.*
- *The out of school club at brae has massively improved our situation as we now have a reliable place for our child to go after school*

- *Childcare is expensive! For an under 2yr old I am having to pay £7.80 an hour! During a time when everything else is high too, it makes it hard to earn enough to live off when half my wage goes to paying for childcare.*
- *I am very pro-extending funding for childcare for parents who want this, but it must be said that parents should also be supported through enhanced maternity packages to care for their own children under 2 and still be allowed to return to a place of work. Families shouldn't have to choose between caring for their own children and being financially stable through their own paid work.*
- *Any form of child care would be useful, currently unable to work more than one day as there is no childcare available.*