

Childcare matters: What the public thinks about childcare in Northern Ireland ^[1]

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Source: NICMA

Format: Report

Publication Date: 19 May 2008

AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf ^[2]
- Press release ^[3]

Excerpts from executive summary:

Childcare policy has had a much higher profile in Great Britain and in the Republic of Ireland than in Northern Ireland. The UK government has committed itself to a target of universal childcare provision right across the UK. It is investing £4 billion over the next three years (2008 - 11) in funding for Sure Start projects, and to support early years and childcare provision. The Irish government is spending 575 million on its five-year National Childcare Investment Programme which is designed to create up to 50,000 new childcare places.

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive is developing policies which should help to improve access to childcare. However, Northern Ireland has, to date, missed out on a number of government funded childcare initiatives which have been introduced in England. The available evidence suggests a serious shortage of childcare places in Northern Ireland, and the supply of places with registered childminders has been falling. This is of particular concern, given that registered childminding is by far the most popular and affordable form of daycare, accounting for 63% of full-time daycare places and 37% of all childcare places in Northern Ireland.

NICMA & the Childminding Association wanted to find out what the Northern Ireland public thinks about childcare. It commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out a comprehensive survey of 1,024 adults in Northern Ireland to gauge their views.

Key findings from the survey include:

- more than four-fifths of respondents (83%) thought the Northern Ireland Executive should give priority to the provision of good quality, affordable childcare for all that need it
- 91% supported the introduction of mandatory basic training as part of the registration process for childminders
- more than half of all parents (52%) said the quality of care was an important consideration in seeking childcare
- day nurseries were viewed more favourably than childminders in terms of the quality of care they were perceived as providing, but there appeared to be less awareness of what childminders can offer
- there was a strong preference among many parents for care provided by someone who knows the child
- word of mouth recommendation was by far the most favoured method of finding childcare

Region: Europe ^[4]

Tags: quality ^[5]

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