

Two-thirds rely on family for child care [GB] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Two-thirds of parents still rely on family and friends to look after their children, despite the government's efforts to increase the availability of affordable child care, the children's minister, Margaret Hodge, admitted today.

While 40% would prefer to put their child in nursery or daycare, many are concerned about the quality of child care staff and services, said the minister.

A third of the 600 parents surveyed by the government said their main concern was how well qualified child care staff were, with 60% reporting this as one of their top three concerns.

Nearly four in 10 (39%) said facilities "not being up to scratch" was one of their main three worries, a quarter reported that child care arrangements did not fit in with their working lives.

But Mrs Hodge predicted the government's 10-year child care strategy would lead to greater use of professional child care.

Speaking at a child care seminar, organised by thinktank the Social Market Foundation, the minister said more parents would choose this option as the quality and range of services available grew.

Just under two-thirds of parents surveyed thought that the responsibility for organising child care should be shared by both parents, and 11% considered it should be the responsibility of the father.

Mrs Hodge said this signalled a welcome change in social attitudes. Although one in five parents thought child care should mainly be the mother's job.

The government's child care strategy includes establishing a children's centre in every community, extending child care and providing more before-and-after-school activities for children.

- reprinted from the Guardian

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