

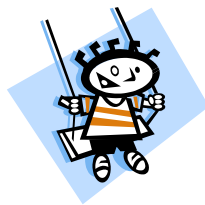
# Supporting Work-Life Balance Using Non-Standard Hours Childcare

*Objective 1 South Yorkshire Public Authorities  
Work Life Balance project*

**Centre for Social Inclusion  
Sheffield Hallam University  
with  
Creating More Balance South Yorkshire**

**2004**

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## Executive Summary

1. This research and training project was commissioned through the Gender Measure of the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme, as part of the South Yorkshire Public Authorities Work Life Balance project. The aim of the project was to conduct research into innovative practice in providing childcare support to employees who work outside traditional office hours.
2. The growing demands of a service-based economy have eroded the traditional 9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday working week. Large numbers of public sector workers now regularly work outside a standard working day/week. New working patterns, such as round the clock work, shift work and extended hours, together with the 'long hours culture' characteristic of the labour market in the UK (HM Treasury and DTI 2003) have serious implications for parents' childcare arrangements. In addition, increasing parental employment and changes in cultural and social attitudes highlight issues of work-life balance, bringing growing demand for non-standard hours childcare provision to the fore.
3. The employment sectors which particularly require staff to work non-standard hours include services providing 24-hour cover, seven days a week, such as: the NHS, police, fire and prison services; retail distribution, banking and the finance sector; manufacturing; and leisure and tourism (DfES 2001). This research has been concerned to address issues relevant to large, public sector employers.
4. Increasingly, employers are recognising that they need to support their employees in meeting their family obligations. Employers focusing on this issue typically consider providing access to day nurseries, making arrangements to enable parents to access holiday schemes and out-of-school provision, offering information and advice and, in some cases, offering financial subsidies which support their employees with childcare costs. This report has confirmed that effective support can be developed which meets the needs of employed parents whose work duties extend beyond routine office hours. It has emphasised that there is real, and probably growing, demand for non-standard childcare services, and has located examples in the UK and in Scandinavia, where successful and sustainable schemes have been put in operation to meet such parents' needs and provided high quality care for their children.
5. A small number of current schemes have been identified for inclusion as our case study examples, with the full co-operation of the organisations concerned. The case studies are presented using a common format, with the aim of highlighting the background to the development of the services concerned, outlining the nature of the services offered and identifying how

such provision is designed, funded and delivered. They illustrate the benefits arising for both employees and employers when such schemes have become established and operate in a sustainable way. The case studies form the core element of the portfolio of training materials developed by CMB South Yorkshire for use in the training events for South Yorkshire public sector employers.

# Part One: Research Report

## 1. Background and introduction

This research and training project was commissioned through the Gender Measure of the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme, through the South Yorkshire Local Authority Work Life Balance project. The research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University in the first phase of this project forms the basis of this report. The research was designed to underpin the development of training materials, and the delivery of training events, by Sheffield Hallam's partner in this project, CMB South Yorkshire, to a wide range of South Yorkshire public sector employers and authorities.

This project was developed following a review, conducted in 2002, of information and provision relating to the support of South Yorkshire public sector employees with childcare responsibilities, carried out by Professor Sue Yeandle, in her role as Gender Champion for the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme, with the support of Dr Cinnamon Bennett, in her role as the Programme's Gender Manager. The review included a number of consultation meetings with South Yorkshire public sector employers, and consideration of a wide range of documentation supplied by their organisations. It resulted in the proposal to conduct research into innovative practice in providing childcare support to employees who work outside traditional office hours.

A key aim of the research element of the project, conducted during winter/spring 2003/4, was to explore a key difficulty and weakness in current public sector employer support for employees with childcare roles: how to provide appropriate and affordable childcare options for employees whose working hours are not confined to a standard working day, or to standard weekdays, Monday to Friday? Large numbers of public sector workers, including nurses, doctors, care workers, social workers, police officers, fire officers, ambulance staff and many others now regularly work outside a standard working day/week, and their needs for childcare support are currently poorly provided for in the South Yorkshire region.

The South Yorkshire Gender Profile (2004, prepared by Yeandle and colleagues as part of a separate research project for the South Yorkshire Objective 1 Directorate, and available from the Directorate) had already shown that South Yorkshire, and certain Districts within it, face a challenging agenda in developing adequate childcare services. South Yorkshire is by no means alone in having scant 'non-standard hours' childcare provision, but it was known that, in certain other parts of the country, some employers had developed innovative schemes which might be of interest as models to adapt or follow, and that in some other countries, much more extensive childcare support was available and appeared to operate successfully.

The research element of this project thus commenced with a review of relevant developments across the UK. It also included identification of some Scandinavian examples. Using the research evidence gathered in winter 2003/4, the research team has assembled examples of non-standard hours / atypical hours childcare provision across the UK and Scandinavia, looking for examples of successful practice, and focusing particularly on public sector workers such as the police service, fire service, ambulance service, NHS workers, social workers etc. From this review, the CSI team selected six examples for more detailed research, and

these form the case studies in Part 2 of this report. The case studies have been developed in consultation with relevant employers and childcare providers, and aim to present, in a succinct way, the key features of the 'non-standard hours' childcare on offer, and how it has been developed and is sustained, and how it benefits the employers and employees concerned.

## **2. Aims and objectives of the work**

The aims and objectives of the Non-Standard Hours Childcare Research and Training Project can be briefly summarised as follows:

- To conduct research into the provision of childcare support aimed at employees who are parents working 'non-standard' hours (i.e. outside 9-5 on weekdays), identifying how such provision is designed, funded and delivered.
- To focus on UK examples delivered in the public sector, which would be of particular relevance to the South Yorkshire public sector agencies who had identified the need for the project.
- To prepare case studies which summarise the key features of the provision identified, and could be used as part of a portfolio of training materials for public sector employers.
- To use the portfolio of training materials as the basis for training events to be set up and delivered in South Yorkshire during Autumn/Winter 2004 by CMB South Yorkshire.

## **3. Demand for non-standard hours childcare**

The growing demands of a service-based economy have eroded the traditional 9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday working week. Large proportions of the labour force now have to be available beyond the old work pattern. New work patterns, such as round the clock work, shift work and extended hours are now found everywhere, in shops, at the end of the phone, in hospitals, care homes and post offices, to name but a few. In addition to changing working patterns, increasing parental employment and changes in cultural and social attitudes highlight the issues of work-life balance, bringing increasing demand for non-standard hours childcare provision to the fore.

### Changing working patterns

Non-standard hours are not a new phenomenon. Professions such as nursing and the police and some manufacturing industries have always required non-standard hours work, though it is becoming more widespread. However, it is only comparatively recently that the government and public sector employers have recognised the strong link between recruitment and retention difficulties in public sector employment and the challenging work-life balance scenario that confronts employees who work shifts and enact emergency duties, which must be delivered around the clock. In a recent survey of 7,500 employees, only 35% worked a standard week, while 15% worked on Sundays and one in eight worked both Saturday and Sunday (Hogarth et al 2001). Increasing numbers of

employers depend on the round-the-clock availability of their workers, often at short notice or for unpredictable shift patterns (Daycare Trust 2000).

With the growth of a service-based economy and 24-hour operation, shift work with extended hours has become widespread. 45% of women work over 40 hours a week and 30% of men work more than 50 hours (Harkness 1999). Almost one quarter of employees say they sometimes work at night and 15% work shifts (IDS 2000). Shift work accounts for a significant proportion of those working evenings and nights. 40% of those regularly working nights and 34% of those working evenings worked time-varying shifts (ONS 1998).

A now widely recognised characteristic of the labour market in the UK is the 'long hours culture' (HM Treasury and DTI 2003). Working hours have increased over the past 10 years for both men and women, and especially among managers and professionals. Full-time employees in the UK now work the longest hours in Europe. Despite the Working Time Directive (European Union 1998), one in six workers now puts in more than a 48-hour week, and around 11% of full-time employees work 60 or more hours a week, particularly fathers with dependent children (Hogarth et al 2001; TUC 2002; Cousins and Tang 2003).

Parents are at the heart of this new workforce: 61% of working families contain parents employed outside regular 9-5 hours (DfEE 2000), managing shifts, and working during early mornings, evenings, nights and weekends. A study by the Daycare Trust (2000) also suggests:

- 34% of working families contain a parent who worked weekends
- 30% of working families contain a parent who worked long hours
- 22% of working families contain a parent who worked shifts

Frequent shift changes, short notification periods and the obligation to work overtime have serious implications for parents' childcare arrangements. 28% of unemployed mothers in couples said unsuitable hours meant they could not become employed and 41% of lone parents blamed unsuitable hours for their unemployment (ibid).

#### Increasing parental employment

Apart from these changing working patterns, demographic changes also show an increasing number of employees with childcare responsibilities (Home Office Statistics 1996). Employment among women with young children has risen sharply since the latter half of 1980s. The employment rate among women with a child under 5 doubled between 1984 and 2000, from 27% to 54%, and far exceeded the rate of increase among all women over this period (Brannen et al 1997; Bell 2000; Twomey 2001). While part-time employment has continued to predominate among employed women with children, the growth in full-time employment has recently outstripped part-time growth. There is therefore an increasing need for childcare services to cover both part-time and full-time working hours.

In addition to the above changes in demographic and social trends, employees no longer expect to have a job for life; people are 'shopping around' to find the



best working conditions for them. Culture and attitudes are also changing. Increasingly employees have a desire to 'have a life' away from the workplace. In a survey of parents' demand for childcare undertaken for the Department for Education and Skills, 33% of households (with a child aged 14 or under) had a parent who worked long hours (over 45 hours a week) and 16% had a parent who worked shifts. Overall, around a third (35%) of parents had a non-standard hour working pattern (Woodland et al 2002).

The implications of these developments are increasingly being addressed by employers, trade unions and in government policy. As a recent review of research in this field confirms (Dex 2003), both employees and employers are becoming more familiar with the concept of 'family-friendly' employment, and are seeking to use flexible employment arrangements to develop policies which support employees with parental or caring responsibilities. Recent analysis of line managers' perspectives (Yeandle et al 2003) showed widespread acceptance among employers that there is a 'business case' underpinning this approach, and that organisations can become more efficient and effective by addressing these issues. However, many employers and managers continue to struggle with effective implementation of family-friendly policies, and good schemes which tackle the difficulty of securing reliable, affordable, good quality childcare outside of conventional nursery/school opening hours are few in number.

#### Demand in the public sector

In 1997, the UK Government made a commitment to investing in childcare to increase the number of places, and to improve the quality and affordability of childcare. However, formal childcare options, e.g. day nurseries, childminders, registered after school clubs and holiday play schemes are still in short supply. These options are still used by only 13% of parents with dependent children as their usual, main form of childcare, with 8% of parents using formal provision in combination with informal childcare (informal childcare arrangements with relatives, friends etc.) (Daycare Trust 2002). As the figures below confirm, employers who provide practical help with childcare remain unusual:

- 5% of companies currently provide a workplace nursery
- 2% have a reserved nursery place scheme
- 3% have after school clubs for all employees' children (ibid.)

A study by the Daycare Trust for the Department for Education and Skills, which aimed to identify the demand for and availability of childcare for parents working non-standard hours, surveyed 40 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) in England. Fewer than half were able to identify any childcare services that could meet the needs of families working outside the hours of 8am to 6pm, although 86% knew of local employers who required employees to work at these atypical times (DfES 2001).

The employment sectors which particularly require staff to work non-standard hours include public services providing 24-hour cover, seven days a week such as the NHS, police, fire and prison services; retail distribution, banking and the finance sector; manufacturing; and leisure and tourism (DfES 2001). A study by Statham and Mooney (2003) identified demand for childcare at atypical times

from both the 'traditional' service industries such as the NHS and also call centres, the media and transport.

Taking the NHS as an example, the majority of NHS nurses have caring responsibilities and one in six have pre-school children. Yet more than a third of nurses now work a rotating 3-shift pattern and the number working 12 hours shifts has doubled. Only one quarter of nurses with access to crèches were able to use them, citing cost and failure to fit in with working hours as their reasons (Daycare Trust 2000).

The NHS Childcare Strategy is helping to recruit and keep the staff the NHS needs according to a report by Daycare Trust (2002). This research shows that 83% of parents working for the NHS found the strategy helpful in meeting their childcare needs, and 31% felt that the strategy had enabled them to return to or remain in work. Examples of ways this strategy is underpinning relevant developments are included in the case studies.

It has been shown that in the NHS, tailored childcare provision reduces staff absences and increases job satisfaction and morale. NHS nurseries and holiday play schemes are regarded as particularly effective, and a wide range of support and advice is being provided by more than 230 local NHS childcare coordinators, whose duties range from finding childcare places and offering childcare vouchers to the provision of emergency childcare. At present, the NHS is leading the way in employer-supported childcare. Since its childcare strategy was launched in April 2001, 6,000 new nursery places have been created, and well over £70 million has been invested in improving childcare services for NHS staff (Daycare Trust 2004).

#### **4. Non-standard hours childcare and the role of employers**

Increasingly, employers are recognising that they need to support their employees in meeting their family obligations. This is usually expressed by employers as a desire to offer 'family-friendly' employment, or employment which enables staff to achieve a good 'work-life balance'. Some employers explicitly link this to an 'equal opportunities' agenda, recognising that women employees, who continue to take the major role in unpaid family duties, even when they work full-time, will be disadvantaged, and unable to progress within their jobs, if they do not have their employers' support.

Many employers are also responding to current economic circumstances in the UK labour market, which has now enjoyed a long period of sustained lowering of unemployment. Recent government figures indicated that official unemployment was at its lowest in spring 2004 for twenty years. Such conditions in the labour market are linked to the skill shortages and difficulty in recruiting or replacing staff, which are reported by many employers. In these conditions, employers have an added incentive to find ways of offering good working conditions, and addressing employees' needs for support in their parenting duties is one way for them to do this. The kind of support employers offer is affected by the size of the organisation and the nature of its business, as well as by its location and the composition of its workforce. This research has been concerned to address

issues relevant to large, public sector employers. Employers of this type typically consider providing access to day nurseries, making arrangements to enable parents to access holiday schemes and out-of-school provision, offering information and advice and, in some cases, offering financial subsidies which support their employees with childcare costs. In Section 5 below, we report on this project's findings relating to the range of options available to support employed parents whose job responsibilities extend beyond the standard working week and day. These include some innovative or newly developed options, which public sector employers in other parts of the UK have begun to develop, and which South Yorkshire organisations may feel offer useful models for them to consider.

## 5. Types of Non-Standard Hours Childcare

Our research method, which employed a desk-based approach, identified a quite varied range of non-standard hours provision. We have categorised into five types, outlined in detail below. It is worth noting that childcare vouchers are also being used by employers to assist parents in financing the formal childcare they draw upon.

### Extended Hours Nurseries

Extended hours nurseries refer to those day nurseries providing extended hours of childcare outside the working hours of 8am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. For school aged children, there can also be 'after school clubs' which are a form of extended hours provision. Extended hours nurseries appear to be growing in number within the National Health Service for all those health care workers who are required to work atypical times as part of their job. This is likely to be a result of the Government's National Childcare Strategy, launched in 1998, which also brought in a specific funding stream for Primary Care Trusts to use in providing improved childcare services for their staff members. Around £70 million was set aside for NHS trusts to work on their own specific childcare strategies, for example employing childcare co-ordinators, and building new on-site nurseries.

The Abacus Children's Centre at the University Hospital in Lewisham, for example, traditionally open from 7am to 6pm, began to further extend its childcare services during evenings (6pm to 10pm) and weekends (7am to 6pm) in July 2002. An extension to the centre's building in the grounds of the hospital was added to accommodate this service, with evening sessions open from 6pm to 10pm, and weekend times operating from 7am to 6pm on both Saturday and Sunday<sup>1</sup>. The childcare services provided by St. Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust also include an on-site day nursery with opening hours from 6.45am to 5.45pm, and extended evening hours childcare from 5.45pm to 9.30pm if required. Weekend opening is provided for staff who are working or on call, and emergency childcare is in place for staff with short-term childcare needs. Finally, another NHS example is the 'Little Richard' nursery at St. Richard's Hospital, part of the Royal West Sussex NHS Trust. This provision is available 6.45am-6.30pm, with emergency places also offered if required.

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<sup>1</sup> See Statham, J. and Mooney, A. (2003) 'Around the Clock, Childcare services at atypical times' for more information.

There are also examples of extended hours nurseries outside the NHS. For example, the West Midlands Fire Service day nursery provides extended hours and flexible childcare services outside the normal nursery time of 8am - 7pm during weekdays.

The private sector provides further instances of extended hours nurseries, depending on labour market requirements in the area. Two examples, which have received both research and popular media interest, are Jumping Jacks, a private nursery in Cumbria moving to opening twenty-four hours a day this year, and The Farmhouse in Surrey, part of the Cranbrook Group of nurseries, a long-standing twenty-four hours nursery<sup>2</sup>. The latter is in an innovative partnership with Gatwick Airport Ltd, thus providing many pilots, cabin crew, and airport ground staff facilities for childcare when they are at work over non-standard hours.

### Childminder Networks

Networks of childminders may offer flexible childcare services (up to the age of fourteen) to cover both standard and non-standard working hours, including overnight childcare. They are often managed by a network co-ordinator whose role is to assess, recruit, support and monitor the quality of network childminders, and also acts as a point of contact for parents. A good example is the Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary Childminding Network. In joining the network, childminders agree to work shift patterns, including overnight and weekend care if necessary, which suits the hours of police staff. Childminders are thought to be a good source of non-standard hours childcare because they can often provide a home-like environment.

There are a number of different kinds of childminding networks in operation at the moment. One model coming into more widespread use is the Children Come First networks (CCF). These fast-developing networks, introduced by the National Childminders' Association in partnership with the Department for Education and Skills and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), were the first of their kind to be established. Using a nationally recognised quality assurance scheme (set out in the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter), they are innovative in including an early years education element within the care provision, and adopting a regular monitoring approach (every six to eight weeks) with individual childminders.

The Children Come First childminding networks offer childminders regular guidance and supervision, peer support, training, and access to toy libraries and equipment loan schemes. Parents have access to the network coordinator for help with arranging holiday and sickness cover between individual childminders and parents.

Funding for childminding networks comes from a variety of sources, including individual employers, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, local authorities, and Sure Start programmes. In the case of the CCF networks, the arrangement can include line management by NCMA staff, or self-management

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<sup>2</sup> Statham, J. and Mooney, A. (2003) 'Around the Clock, Childcare services at atypical times'.

arrangements put in place by the funding organisation. Here the funding organisation can set the specific target market for which the childcare provision is offered, e.g. a particular police authority providing a network specifically for their staff.

Childminding networks are increasingly being promoted by the government, and examples of organisations opting to fund childminding networks include:

- City of York Council
- Leeds City Council
- Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
- Cumbria County Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Greater Manchester Police
- West Yorkshire Police
- Avon and Somerset Police

### Emergency Care

Emergency care refers to the childcare that is needed in emergency situations. Examples include a shift continuing beyond its official end time due to circumstances beyond the employees' control (e.g. police officers, nurses or doctors on emergency duties), or staff being called in to work at very short notice (for instance, police required at a court hearing), which prevents them returning to their children on time or arranging alternative appropriate childcare on what might normally be an off-duty day. Although we did not find an abundance of such provision in our research, some employers have taken steps to support staff in these situations. West Yorkshire Police provides a good illustration and is included as one of our case studies. The West Yorkshire Police childcare team's information service is able to identify possible alternative carers (either in a nursery or childminder setting) and to help arrange childcare cover for staff. Similarly, Bradford NHS Trust has a childcare co-ordinator who runs an Emergency Childminding Network Team.

### Home Care

Home care provision is childcare provided in the child's home - for example, overnight home-based childcare. An example is the Sitter Service planned by Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, still in the early stages of development. The idea here is to register a sitter service in a given area, or for a particular employer, where nursery nurses then provide childcare for parents in the child's own home. Clearly, there are overlaps with childminder networks here, as some childminders will be registered for care in *their own* home only, while others will be able and willing to become involved in home care in the *child's home*. This is a newly emerging area of provision in childcare (we were not able to find any suitable examples in our search for case studies), but one that is currently being explored by a wide variety of employers and organisations.

Bristol Children's Information Service, in collaboration with the Single Parent Action Network (SPAN), for example, has investigated a home-based childcare

service, similar to the 'sitter' services available in Scotland and promoted by One Parent Families Scotland. The services available in Scotland provide childcare seven days a week in the child's own home, including hours early in the morning, and late at night. Current Scottish provision is also the inspiration for the Bradford Community Nanny Scheme, created in March 2002 by the charity Gingerbread, and the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The group of qualified nursery nurses, in this instance, care for children of lone parents in their own homes, 7.30am-10pm, seven days a week.

#### Holiday Play Schemes / Clubs

This type of childcare encompasses the sort of care that is needed for nursery or school age children when their normal facilities are closed due to school holidays. The traditional problem with holiday schemes run in schools has tended to be their restricted opening hours, often 10am to 3pm, which did not even fit well with the 'standard' 9am - 5pm working day. To address the needs of parents working outside standard hours, holiday clubs need to stay open for longer hours. Among relevant examples we found Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, which operates a Saturday Club 8.30am - 5pm, and West Yorkshire Police which provides holiday schemes which are open from 8am until 6pm.

#### Co-ordinated approaches

Finally, it is important to highlight that some organisations and employers are developing co-ordinated approaches, sometimes described as '*packages of care*', to assist parents in having 'wrap around' care for their children when they are in work or unable to provide childcare themselves. Many individuals working in the childcare sector have observed that for most parents, what is needed are combinations of different types of care, capable of meeting the needs of changing families and children of different ages. A combination approach is often the most used and most popular option. A good illustration in developing support in this way is provided by Barts and the London NHS Trust, which offers a wide range of childcare services to staff, including two workplace nurseries operating 7am - 6pm, a childminding network offering out of hours care, a 'pick up from nursery service', and holiday play schemes. The childcare services offered by this Trust are also featured as one of the case studies for this report.

## **6. Lessons from Scandinavian Experience**

Childcare in Nordic countries, as in Denmark and Sweden, aims to provide a combination of care and education. In both countries local authorities are responsible for establishing, running and supervising childcare facilities. They may establish facilities of their own or make arrangements with private contractors.

## Finance

In these countries, local authorities also provide financial support for childcare schemes. Denmark subsidises so-called 'pool schemes', under which there are no requirements as to the organisational form of the facilities. In addition, many local authorities provide financial support for parents who choose private childcare facilities. In Sweden, local authorities provide grants for non-municipal childcare, i.e. undertakings run by an organisation other than the local authority. The sum paid for each child may not differ greatly from the cost per child in corresponding municipal undertakings. About 15% of all Swedish children registered with preschools attend a preschool operating under non-municipal auspices, the most common form being the parent co-operative. Childcare programmes are increasingly financed via parental fees. In 2000, just over 19% of gross costs were offset by fees, while municipal tax revenue and government grants accounted for the remainder.

## Forms of childcare

Childcare facilities in Denmark include institutions run by local authorities, such as crèches, kindergartens and age-integrated facilities, and care in private homes such as childminder arrangements and private childcare (not covered by the general rules concerning childcare facilities). Usually Danish childcare facilities are open between 6.30am and 5pm. Some local authorities also offer childcare during evenings and nighttime hours. Places are usually reserved for children whose parents work outside the ordinary opening hours. Most childcare facilities are closed on official holidays. Other holiday closing periods, e.g. following official holidays or during the summer vacation, are planned by the individual institutions.

In Sweden, forms of public childcare, defined by the Education Act, include both preschooling provided at preschools, in family daycare homes and at open preschools, and school-age childcare provided at leisure-time centres, in family daycare homes and at open leisure-time centres. Most Swedish preschools are open all year round, and daily opening times are varied to fit in with parents' working hours. Leisure-time centres care for children whose parents are in employment or studying during the time the child is not at school, i.e. mornings, afternoons and holiday times.

## Case Studies from Denmark and Sweden

### Case 1: Vartov Daycare Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark

Vartov Daycare Centre is both a nursery and kindergarten, providing 65 places for children aged 1-6 years. It opened between 7am - 7pm in the past, but from 1996 it began to open 24 hours a day for 7 days a week. Children can stay in the daycare centre overnight if parents are working at night. There is no care provided outside the main centre premises, and the centre itself is homelike with bedrooms, sitting room, bathroom and kitchen. There are 25-30 staff, most of whom are educated and trained in childcare. As the centre always has a long waiting list there are no vacancies.

Parents of the children who attend the Centre all work in paid jobs. To get a place for a child, parents need to show evidence that they work non-standard hours. Parents who use this service include nurses, doctors, students, and self-employed / freelance parents, for example those who run a shop or restaurant. Some other parents also work in policing and transport services, with some service users also being lone parents.

The daycare centre provides a variety of services. Children can follow their parents' working hours: they can go to school during the day and go to the centre in the evening. The maximum number of nights they stay is two. The Centre emphasises that it is important to discuss with parents what arrangements are best for their children. Most children go only during the day.

The main difficulty for managing non-standard hours services in the Centre relates to communication between staff who work on different shifts and on different days. The staff try to solve this problem by taking up others' responsibilities readily and by balancing duties between themselves and other members of the team.

The Copenhagen City Council, who also paid for the setting-up costs of the centre, mainly pays the Centre's fees for these services. Parents only pay around DKK 2,000 every month, considered to be a very reasonable price for the service. The daycare centre has not needed to promote or market its non-standard hours childcare services, as there is a central office for the whole city of Copenhagen, providing information about different daycare centres and organised by the city council. Parents go there as a central point of information, and choose what they want for their children.

Parents are very satisfied with the non-standard hours childcare services provided by the daycare centre, for example some parents like the time they have with their children when they have a day off during the week. However, the Centre has no plans to expand. The manager's view is that:

*'Our daycare centre should not be turned into a hotel. We don't serve as baby sitters for parents going out in the evenings. But in day time even if parents are off work, children may like to stay in the centre, e.g. to go swimming, go to theatre, etc. with other children. We only provide services for parents working out of hours.'*



### Case 2: A family daycare home, Umea, Sweden

This daycare home scheme was set up after a request from a child's parents who had specific needs because of their work. This is not a special pre-school but a daycare home with people taking care of children in their own homes or in the children's homes. The services are provided for children aged 1-13 years whose parents are working. There were 2 staff at the time of the interview, and one of them has looked after 5 children. There are no vacancies. There is no promotion of the services and people learn about it via word of mouth from one parent to another.

The daycare home provides childcare outside the usual office hours of 8.30am-5pm Monday-Friday. The services offered include early morning, evening, overnight and weekend childcare. The staff can look after children outside the daycare home and in children's own homes. Sometimes they also pick children up from pre-school.

All parents using this provision are employees, and some are lone parents. For example, one is a union board member who needs to travel a lot, and another is a nurse. Demands for flexible childcare mainly come from such parents. However it is difficult to recruit more staff, and one of the employees of the daycare home is the grandmother of a child who uses the non-standard hours services.

The financial sources supporting the services come from the community. The staff are paid by the hour. The daycare home gets a subsidy from public sector employers for a specific period when parents need to use the services. Parents pay a monthly sum related to their average salary and by voucher which is sent by the community. This service is more expensive than ordinary childcare at pre-school.

While the service meets a real need in enabling parents to work, it does have the disadvantage that parents using the service are not able to take care of their own children at night. The service is experienced in a variety of ways by children, who are taken care of through the service, but may also sometimes be at pre-school or school during the daytime and receiving this different form of care in the evening and at night.

## 7. Overview

This report has confirmed that effective support can be developed which meets the needs of employed parents whose work duties extend beyond routine office hours. It has emphasised that there is real, and probably growing, demand for non-standard childcare services, and has located examples in the UK and in Scandinavia, where successful and sustainable schemes have been put in operation to meet such parents' needs and provided high quality care for their children.

A small number of current schemes have been identified for inclusion as our case study examples<sup>3</sup>. The case studies are presented using a common format, with the aim of highlighting the background to the development of the services concerned, outlining the nature of the services offered and how they are financed, and considering who uses the services and what benefit arise from both employees and employers when such schemes have become established and operate in a sustainable way.

The case studies form the core element of the portfolio of training materials developed by CMB South Yorkshire for use in the training events for South Yorkshire public sector employers.

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<sup>3</sup> Within the case studies, non-standard hours childcare is defined as childcare offered outside 8.30am - 5pm Monday - Friday. We have focused especially on early morning, evening, overnight and weekend childcare provision.

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## **Part Two: Case Studies**

## Greater Manchester Police

### Why Has Greater Manchester Police developed Non-Standard Childcare?

Great Manchester Police (GMP) is one of the busiest forces in the country with an increasing number of police officers (8,000 in March 2004). A recent survey undertaken by the Force childcare co-ordinator identified a significant number of problems affecting parents. The survey obtained responses from 249 staff. Of these, 20% had problems with out of hours childcare, 21% had problems when on emergency duties, 8% sometimes required overnight care, 21% required school holiday care, 26% had problems with the cost of childcare and 4% had problems with the location of childcare.

As a result of this survey, the childcare co-ordinator recommended the development of a two-year Childcare Strategy (2004-06). The overall aim of the strategy is to help GMP staff balance childcare and work responsibilities, and, in turn, to help GMP recruit and retain staff. The childcare co-ordinator aims to increase the access to flexible childcare provision, provide better information about childcare and make childcare more affordable. The strategy proposed the following ways to inform parents of flexible childcare provision:

- Childcare and Maternity packs to include accurate up-to-date childcare information
- A leaflet to advertise the Children's Information Service
- A number of seminars and workshops to focus on specific childcare issues
- A quarterly newsletter to include any new childcare information or initiatives
- A dedicated childcare intranet site to include up-to-date childcare information
- A display board regularly updated with childcare information in every station/headquarters is also to be explored

### What Non-Standard Childcare Services Are Offered?

- Childminding Network  
A network of childminders (80 -100) covers all areas that provide a range of flexible services.
- Day Nursery Network  
To provide parents with greater choice, a network of nurseries that provide flexible services, including irregular days, has been established.

- Partnerships  
GMP is actively developing partnerships with relevant local authorities and other organisations to encourage new and existing providers to adapt their services to meet the needs of GMP parents.
- School Holiday Care  
A network of school holiday provision (10-20 school holiday clubs) is being developed, while the feasibility of setting up provision in partnership with private providers and other local employers is explored. However, in light of the central government funding which is available to set up this type of provision, it has been decided that GMP will not meet the costs of any future school holiday provision.
- Home Childcarers  
The feasibility of developing a home childcare scheme where the childcare is provided in the child's own home is being investigated. The Government has recently (April 2003) introduced a scheme whereby registered childminders can work from the child's own home, however some difficulties arising from regulations for registering this scheme have still to be overcome. According to the childcare co-ordinator, research on a scheme 'Dundee Sitters' is being conducted to further investigate the feasibility of the home childcare services.
- Emergency Care  
Create a number of emergency childcare places in a variety of childcare provision for parents to access when regular childcare arrangements breakdown or they find themselves temporarily without childcare. These places will be available at day nurseries and registered childminders and will still incur costs to the parents. To date, there have been a number of places available for parents who need emergency childcare.

Considerable progress has already been made on a number of the initiatives:

#### Childcare Co-ordinator

The childcare co-ordinator post is based in the GMP Equal Opportunities Unit. The co-ordinator is available to provide information and advice to working parents on childcare support and the Force's work life balance orientated initiatives and policies as options. This includes information and advice on:

- the different childcare options available
- finding and choosing childcare provision
- free education places
- childcare law and regulations
- Tax Credits and Child Allowance
- Work life balance practices
- GMP childcare initiatives.

The co-ordinator's role includes using GMP's childminding network database to check vacancies as parents request non-standard hours childcare.

### Childminding Network

The childminders in the network can provide any of the following services:

- Full and Part time care
- Flexible Hours (shift care)
- Weekend care
- Overnight care
- Short term or emergency care
- Bank holiday care.

All are professional childminders who work in their own homes to provide care and learning opportunities for other people's children in a family setting. All are registered with Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education), have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau, are insured, have first aid training and have undertaken introductory training.

The childminding network was set up in early 2003. Establishing the network was a long-term process, with non-standard hours childcare provision first becoming available in September 2003. The service is available from 6am to next day, including any time, any day and overnight childcare provision. The network can also provide picking up services after school. There is currently no care provided in children's own homes although the childcare co-ordinator aims to develop this as an added feature of the service in the future.

The network is capable of supplying up to 100 places, depending on childminders' vacancies. A childminder may offer one or two places. Childminders agree to work non-standard hours as an additional part of their registration. Children's ages range from 0-14 years old. The service has been promoted via the GMP intranet, a dedicated childcare intranet file, a monthly intranet paper, and a maternity leaflet, etc.

The childcare co-ordinator has not met with major difficulties in providing non-standard hours childcare. However, more childminders are needed, in different locations, as Greater Manchester covers a large area and parents need picking up services in different localities.

### School Holiday Care

A network of school holiday clubs has been established spread over 10 local authorities. To date this includes nearly 20 clubs. Each local authority is different, so this is not always a straightforward process. The childcare coordinator resource is important in building up relations with the local authorities and identifying appropriate links.

### **Who Uses The Services?**

All staff in GMP can have access to the non-standard hours childcare provision, with quite a lot of lone parents using the service. The services required are mainly flexible childcare arrangements for parents working on shifts, or out of hours and on emergency duties.

## **How Are The Services Funded?**

GMP's approach has not included setting-up and running costs, so it has not been necessary to allocate special financial resources. The childcare co-ordinator post, which acts as a bridge between parents and childminders, has been resourced as part of the Force's general budget.

Parents and childminders make direct agreements about payment, with parents paying childminders directly. Childminders may charge different rates in different areas but generally these costs are considered affordable by service users.

In May 2004 the childcare co-ordinator introduced a childcare voucher scheme, as part of a salary sacrifice scheme. Ten different childcare voucher schemes were explored, and four submitted tenders which were assessed by a working party including representatives from payroll, pensions, Unison, the Police Federation, procurement and the childcare coordinator. The successful tenderer has now provided a childcare voucher scheme for a pilot period of 4 months. GMP formally launched this scheme at its childcare event on 27 May 2004.

## **How Does the Force Benefit?**

The non-standard hours childcare services have given parents access to childcare, enabling them to continue in work, and reducing staff leave. Children benefit when there is continuity of care, for example if they get the same childminder for overnight care. However, the childcare co-ordinator indicated that it was important to be aware of disruption to young children's sleep if they have to be sent to childminders in the late evening or early morning.

In the future, it is hoped that it will be possible to expand the service and to include more childminders in the network. The GMP approach is to develop the service in response to clearly identified needs, and the service is not supplied if it is not required for work-related reasons.

## **Further information is available from**

Amanda Venables, Childcare Coordinator, Equal Opportunities Unit, Chester House, Great Manchester Police, Tel 0161 8561151.



## **West Midlands Fire Service**

### **Why Has The Fire Service Developed Non-Standard Childcare?**

Fire Service staff who need childcare, especially shift workers, face considerable problems, an issue which has been highlighted by the Fire Brigades Union. Their situation can be very difficult, with access to quality affordable childcare after daytime hours being practically non-existent for many parents in the Fire Service. According to the Fire Brigades Union, the West Midlands Fire Authority is currently the only authority providing childcare support.

The West Midlands Fire Service operates 41 fire stations across Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry, and the four metropolitan districts of Sandwell, Dudley, Solihull and Walsall. 40 are whole-time stations with firefighters on duty 24 hours a day. One operates on a part-time basis with retained firefighters. The Brigade has its Central Headquarters in Birmingham and has its own Central Supplies and Stores, Transport Engineering Workshops, Occupational Health Centre and Training Centre.

The West Midlands Fire Service operates a Flexible Working Hours Scheme, which aims to enable employees to vary their hours each day, to be able to travel outside of peak traffic times, and to allow flexibility in combining work and personal circumstances. This helps employees with work life balance and addresses the legal requirement to offer flexible working to certain categories of parents with children.

### **What Non-Standard Childcare Services Are Offered?**

Uniquely at present, the West Midlands Fire Service has its own on-site nursery, providing extended hours and flexible childcare services for its employees. The nursery is based at Aston Fire Station Yard, Birmingham. It was established with the assistance of the Fire Authority's Equal Opportunities Committee to enable employees to continue working and developing their careers within the Fire Service. The nursery has been running since March 1991. It is registered for children aged 0-7 years and has full-time and part-time places. There is also a Holiday Scheme available for children aged up to 7 years.

The Nursery normally opens between 8am - 7pm during weekdays. Although it does not provide a weekend service or services outside the main nursery premises, the service is flexible and children can come at 7.30am or stay after 7pm during week days if their parents are on shifts, have meetings or are engaged in operations. If there is an emergency, the nursery also provides evening and overnight childcare, though this is not often required. Overnight care would only be offered if a firefighter was on an emergency call and no other person could collect the child. Some firefighters work on shifts of 2 days or 3

days a week and the nursery's services have to be very flexible to fit in with their working time.

When recruited, all nursery staff are made aware of the importance of being flexible in their work. This approach has enabled nursery staff to provide flexible childcare whenever there is a need. They can also work on shifts if any children need to be cared for outside the regular nursery hours of 8am - 7pm Monday - Friday.

The nursery has 6 staff and provides 19 places for children aged 3 months - 5 years old. During the school holidays, provision is for children aged up to 7. The nursery offers a very personal, home-like and secure environment, and children get a high level of care because it is small. The nursery is currently being refurbished, and it is hoped that it will be able to expand its provision to 23 places when the refurbishment is completed.

The nursery advertises its services via the Fire Service intranet and it also has a Welcome and Information Booklet to distribute to parents. Since fire workers may only work 2 days a week and children are often part-time in the nursery, the nursery staff work on shift pattern. There are three shifts:

- 7.30am - 3.30pm
- 8am - 4pm or 9am - 5pm
- 10.15am - 6pm or 10.45am - 6.30pm

The nursery anticipates that demand for its services will increase in the next 2 years. It may need to relocate to larger premises, possibly in partnership with others, for example, Sure Start or other organisations. The nursery does not plan to provide overnight childcare, except in extreme emergency situations.

West Midlands Fire Service Day Nursery is registered by Ofsted, who regularly inspect the premises, as legally required. Their inspections reassure parents that the nursery is providing a safe and secure environment. All the nursery staff are qualified and/or experienced and have been trained specifically to work with children aged 0-7 years. They receive ongoing in-house and external training and are aware of current legislations and updated practices. All staff have been cleared by the Criminal Records Bureau and have undergone medical screening. The nursery prides itself on providing the highest standard of care and education.

### **Who Uses The Services?**

The users of the nursery services are mainly firefighters. Some station-based staff also use the service, such as those in finance, payroll and other areas in the Fire Service. At least one of the child's parents must be an employee of the Fire Service. At present, users include 14 fathers and 8 mothers working in the Fire Service (some children are part-time in the nursery). 70% of users are full-time employees of the Fire Service and 90% are working shifts, and the demand for flexible childcare provision comes primarily from firefighters on shifts.

### **How Are The Services Funded?**

The West Midlands Fire Service is the main financial source supporting the running of the nursery, subsidising the nursery in total. All the nursery staff are employed by the Fire Service. As it is operated purely for Fire Service employees the nursery does not receive any other public subsidy. Parents pay £25.50 a day for the childcare services, with payment deducted from their salary. These fees are 10% below average fees for the area. The nursery costs are thought to be affordable for all the parents who need the service.

### **How Does The Fire Service Benefit?**

Parents welcome the non-standard hours childcare provision offered by the nursery and it is recognised that the Fire Service needs this full provision to continue. Without it, some parents would not be able to continue their employment within the Fire Service. Parents using the nursery particularly value its flexible childcare provision, which means they do not have to go to a private nursery for non-standard hours childcare. Children have a superb range of activities in the nursery. The nursery's main concern, according to the head of the nursery, is its location, which may not be very convenient for parents working at other stations. The nursery also needs to be bigger, to give room for more children and to provide better storage.

### **Further Information Is Available From**

Joy Wilkinson, Head of the Nursery, West Midlands Fire Service Day Nursery, Aston Fire Station Yard, Presbury Road, Aston, Birmingham B6 6EE, Tel 0121 3271967.

## St. Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust

### **Why Has The Trust Developed Non-Standard Childcare?**

The NHS Childcare Strategy has been led since 2001 by the Department of Health. It is a key element in improving the working lives of staff in the NHS. More than 250,000 NHS staff have children under 14 and it has been established that more nurses and doctors would return to the NHS if they could get childcare help.

The government has provided £70 million of funding for the childcare strategy because childcare has a demonstrable impact on recruitment, retention and return of NHS staff. All NHS organisations must have a childcare strategy to achieve Improving Working Lives (IWL) practice. At the national level, the NHS Plan includes a commitment to provide 150 on-site nurseries with 7,500 subsidised childcare places by 2004, and to ensure all NHS staff are supported by a childcare co-ordinator. The aim is to:

- improve the recruitment and retention of staff
- enable the organisation to achieve practice and status in the IWL initiative
- improve staff's working lives
- decrease stress for working parents.

St. Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust carried out a consultation with staff, using a survey, to find out what their staff needed. This indicated that staff needed out of school provision, help with costs, emergency childcare, evening childcare and weekend opening, plus very flexible nursery care at a very reasonable cost. The Trust then developed an initiative to provide these services for staff who are parents.

### **What Non-Standard Childcare Services Are Offered?**

The Trust feels it is well on its way to making childcare accessible and affordable for all its healthcare workers. The quality of the care has continued to be of a high standard, making all their schemes very popular. The current provision includes:

- An in-house, on-site nursery catering for 111 children aged 0-11years
- Nursery opening hours of 6.45am to 5.45pm
- Evening/twilight care between 5.30pm and 9.30pm
- Weekend opening and evening open, as requested
- An out of school play scheme, wrap-around-care, before and after school (if required)
- A Tax Efficient Scheme giving staff up to 30% of crèche fees

- Differential fees for lower paid workers
- Emergency places available at the crèche
- An Emergency Home Sitter service for when a child is ill, existing childcare has broken down, or another emergency occurs
- Subsidies for children 0-16 years for all registered Out of School schemes during up to 12 weeks school holiday times
- Parents' and Carers' Forums
- Flexible Working and Carers' Packs
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Packs

### On-site nursery

The Trust started its childcare provision in 1989 with only one on-site nursery. In 2000 the nursery was extended from 54 to 111 places, covering the 0-11 age range. There are about 30 nursery staff, no current vacancies for children, and the nursery has a long waiting list. It plans to have a new building in 2006 and to expand the number of places.

The nursery opens from 6.45am to 5.45pm Monday - Friday. If parents require, it also takes children in the evening from 5.45pm to 9.30pm. During weekends the opening hours can be 6.45am - 9.30pm, depending on parents' requests, and by arrangement to suit staff within the crèche. The nursery previously provided a home-sitter service, but this has now stopped through lack of funding and lack of usage. The provision of emergency childcare on site is still available, but there is no provision of overnight childcare or care outside the main nursery premises and no picking up services provided by the nursery.

### Emergency care (on site)

The aim in providing emergency childcare is to help staff with short-term childcare needs. It is organised by the Childcare Coordinator. The whole process involves:

- Identifying the staff member's need and contacting the in-house nursery
- Requesting the days and hours required for the emergency place and contacting the parent to arrange details
- Arranging for the child's details, contact numbers, dietary needs etc to be forwarded to the nursery before the child's arrival
- Arranging a 'pre start' visit to the nursery if possible, to meet and greet the parent and child
- Matching the child to a key worker and introducing him or her to the children's room, toilet facilities and activities etc
- Intense staff support for both child and parent
- Encouraging parent to phone the crèche to enquire how child has settled
- Arranging payment of fees and consulting with parents about further needs
- Supporting parents in choosing alternative care (e.g. home sitter service, other nursery provision or childminder), if they are unable to obtain an onsite nursery place
- Checking what continued support is required

### Out of school holiday scheme in-house

This scheme provides childcare for staff who are working, as identified through the staff consultation. The whole process involves:

- Identifying funding and linking with the EYDCP business plan
- Identifying demand, location, rooms (preferably on site), outside play area, sports, and facilities
- Writing policies and developing a portfolio of evidence on standards
- Preparation for Ofsted registration
- Recruiting, selecting and appointing staff in a 1:8 ratio
- Filling in relevant forms with staff for Criminal Records Bureau, health and Ofsted checks etc.
- Checking insurance and carrying out a risk assessment on building/rooms
- Carrying out health and safety check on existing equipment and buying new equipment as necessary
- Linking with payroll and finance re staff salaries, deduction of fees and any subsidies offered
- Promotion of the scheme
- Furnishing rooms and buying additional equipment; toys, consumables, art materials, make up, baking materials, provisions, and other disposable items

### Emergency home childcare sitter service

This scheme provides a home childcare worker who will sit with the child/children when an emergency occurs, providing the child attending their usual childcare sitting. The whole process involves:

- Identifying funding
- Advertising for staff (ideally a member of staff from the on-site nursery who would be known to parents) or a registered childminder who is registered for Home Childcare
- Setting up policies, practices and procedures, forms etc. and contacting EYDCP
- Registering staff members as home childcare workers if possible through Ofsted
- Organising appointments training etc. and helping build up a portfolio of evidence on Ofsted standards
- Making sure CIB and other checks are completed
- Checking that home sitters' care insurance covers them for business purposes
- Building up a home childcare kit - fire extinguisher, first aid box, fire blanket, storybooks, set of forms, games, craft items, thermometer, local A-Z directory, etc.
- Publicising service
- Provide a good induction programme for sitters e.g. special needs element, sick children, documentation, contact numbers, H&S, risk assessment training.

All these non-standard hours childcare services were promoted within the organisation through internal communication systems.

#### Services the Trust does not currently offer

The Trust, according to the Childcare Coordinator, would not be willing to supply overnight childcare without more research evidence to confirm whether or not such care is in the best interests of the child.

#### **Who Uses The Services?**

Parents using the childcare services provided by the St. Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust are all healthcare economy employees. The demand for non-standard hours childcare mainly comes from staff working on shifts and on call. In particular, nurses working different shifts, on different days require flexible childcare arrangements. Out of hours childcare services are used by a wide range of staff, including nurses without family support for weekend shifts, staff who are lone parents, and junior doctors on rotation, who usually work 6-12 months in hospital.

#### **How Are The Services Funded?**

Government funding is the main financial source supporting the childcare services. For the last 2 years (2002-04) the Trust has received revenue funding (National Childcare Strategy) for the day nursery. This ended in March 2004. The Nursery Education Grant for 3-4 year olds is also available. The Trust has also received New Opportunities Set-up Funding (£22,000) in conjunction with Knowsley Early Years Development Partnership to set up an out of school holiday play scheme, and through the Cheshire and Merseyside Workforce Development Confederation for those extended evening hours and weekend opening services.

Parental fees provide another financial source. Parents pay on average £20 a day, £10.70 for a session of 4.5 hours. One full day is usually a maximum 9 hours (the maximum time recommended that a child should be away from home). Funding has been the Tax Efficient Scheme (a salary sacrifice), through which payment is deducted from parents' salaries. This offers staff savings on tax and national insurance. There is also a differential fee structure, which benefits lower paid workers. The Trust considers its fees are affordable compared with other similar childcare services.

The main challenge in providing non-standard hours childcare is the cost of staffing and keeping fees affordable. Staffing costs vary depending on early, later or weekend childcare services.

## How Does The Trust Benefit?

Non-standard hours childcare provision is essential to parents employed by the Trust. Parents are very positive about the service. They like its flexibility and lower cost. It is always difficult to get a place. The on-site childcare provides quality services and children develop a close relationship with nursery staff. In play schemes the children develop lasting friendships and gain from the wide range of learning experiences/activities offered.

### Comments from senior managers in the Trust

*'In my role I am aware of a reduction in staff concerns about their childcare and other family issues which has reflected in their increased availability for work'*

*'Happy staff provide better care for patients. We all want to ensure patients receive good care; therefore it is important to us that staff are cared for as well. Many NHS staff are people with young families who need to balance work with the needs of children. If we can help these staff, and those who care for older relatives alongside work, then that is a great achievement. I think the initiative we have implemented enables our staff to do that.'*

### Comments from parents

*'I would otherwise have had to work term time only without the out of school holiday scheme for my disabled son.'* (Nurse)

*'Without the Emergency Home Childcare Sitter Service I would otherwise have had to cancel my operating sessions and outpatient appointments resulting in patients sent home without their operation and out-patients consultation. After all that is what we are here for, to give the best possible care to our patients.'* (Consultant Anaesthetist)

### Further Information Is Available From

Mrs. Joan Hardie, Childcare Co-ordinator, St. Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust, Whiston Hospital, HR Department, Prescot, Merseyside L35 5DR, Tel 07789 174268.



## West Yorkshire Police

### Why Has West Yorkshire Police Developed Non-Standard Childcare?

West Yorkshire Police Authority employs around 8,000 members of staff (both uniformed officers and non-uniformed support staff), making it the fourth largest in the country. The headquarters is based in Wakefield although the force covers the whole of West Yorkshire and its five metropolitan districts of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield. West Yorkshire Police officers who were having problems arranging suitable childcare drew attention to their difficulties, and this led to the demand for an in-house initiative.

The West Yorkshire Police childcare services have been available for approximately seven years. West Yorkshire Police was one of the first police forces to employ a designated childcare co-ordinator, although its overall provision has slowly evolved over time. A childcare support worker now assists the childcare co-ordinator in her work, and both work full-time.

The childcare team's provision helps the police authority to:

- address recruitment and retention issues
- meet the Government's targets for the number of women employed in the force
- offer flexibility in shifts and working patterns
- suit the needs of working parents.

### What Non-Standard Childcare Services Are Offered?

The provision comprises two strands: an **information-giving service**, and **holiday club provision**, both available to all West Yorkshire Police staff, regardless of sex or rank.

#### The Childminding Network

The information-giving service consists of databases of local nurseries and records of around 150 childminders across West Yorkshire. The two workers recruit childminders to this database via word of mouth, contact with local Children's Information Services (CIS's) (within and outside of West Yorkshire), and by writing directly to childminders in the area. It is essentially a "vacancy network": the childcare team pass on childminders' (or nursery) details to members of staff as they request information, enabling them to make direct contact with the service they require.

Childminders in the network:

- are all members of the National Childminders Association (NCMA)
- meet Ofsted standards
- are visited by the childcare team before registering
- are encouraged to be as flexible as possible to suit the needs of police staff working non-standard hours and/or experiencing delays to the end of their shift as emergencies arise.

Some of the childminders offer overnight, evening, bank holiday and/or weekend provision.

When emergency childcare is needed, the team contact childminders on the register to locate an emergency place. This can arise, for example, when a police officer has to appear in court at short notice on a normally off-duty day.

### The Holiday Play Scheme

The holiday club provision is offered every school holiday between the hours of 8am and 6pm, offering 168 places in total. In some cases “combinations of childcare” are arranged, such as assisting a staff member in placing their child in the holiday club and in being picked up by a childminder offering out-of-hours childcare. The holiday scheme has been developed in partnership between West Yorkshire Police, the Department for Work and Pensions, and local NHS Trusts, and costs parents from these organisations £15 a day. The clubs are run in five locations, based within schools in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield.

### Ongoing Issues in Providing the Service

- Ofsted registration processes can be difficult to operationalise
- Pay levels in childcare are low, discouraging future staff
- It can be difficult to employ the casual staff needed for the holiday clubs
- Some police officers are reluctant to use childcare provision in certain locations based on their job-based knowledge of the area
- Childminders can display very different personal attitudes towards providing non-standard hours childcare. Newly qualified childminders are often more willing to offer the services that “market forces” require, and the team now approaches childminders as they are newly registered with Ofsted, to ask if they are interested in being on the police database
- There are natural ebbs and flows in demand for the information service, with holiday club enquiries usually beginning in May each year. To keep interest high, they speak to new police recruits before they have families to explain the service on offer for use in the future, if desired
- Overnight care is the least used service, as staff often try to use a combination of care (including family members) to cover these instances: “lots of different options make it work”. This is especially true for single parent members of staff, or couples where both individuals work in the force.

### **Who Uses The Services?**

- The service is used by a variety of Police Officers and Police Staff at different times
- The holiday club is used predominantly by Police Staff (non-uniformed), because it fits more easily with their working hours
- Partnership arrangements with other emergency services in the area, such as local Primary Care Trusts, has resulted in shared holiday club places within each services' own provision.

### **How Are The Services Funded?**

- The services the childcare team provide within West Yorkshire are entirely funded from within the police authority's central budget (determined by WYP)
- Parents do not pay for any information services they receive via the childcare team, although they are responsible for the payment of their childminder and/or nursery fees
- The holiday play scheme was set-up in partnership with the two other employers, using funds from a (then) Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) grant
- The holiday play scheme's running costs are self-financing from the charges made to parents (£15 a day), which cover the costs of renting school buildings, staff costs, petty cash, and insurance
- Funding covers the two members of staffs' salaries and a budget that the co-ordinator controls
- A budget is available to cover, for example, resources and training for childminders, advertising, and the equipment and stationery requirements for the two members of Police Staff.

### **How Does West Yorkshire Police Benefit?**

- The service enables staff at West Yorkshire Police to find suitable childcare, when they would not necessarily have the time to do this themselves
- Assistance in finding emergency childcare is particularly valued
- The police childcare team has good understanding of police shifts and working arrangements
- Police staff find it easier to have contact with colleagues who themselves have had direct contact with each specific childminder
- Continuity of care for children is important; staff can use the same childminders and/or holiday clubs as the child grows older.

In making childcare arrangements easier for their employees, the police authority can help to improve the motivation and productivity levels of their staff, and encourage more new members to join their workforce.

In 2003 the childcare team surveyed all West Yorkshire Police staff about childcare needs. Staff most wanted:

- an in-house nursery;
- financial assistance with childcare, and
- a clearer understanding of what, who, and where the police childcare team was.

The team have subsequently publicised their service and are exploring ways of improving and updating the service they provide. They have decided not to pursue an in-house nursery because of difficulties in financing it, and in choosing a suitable location convenient to all staff.

New areas under active consideration include:

- home care provision
- accredited quality assurance schemes
- childcare vouchers.

The West Yorkshire Police childcare team have also worked in association with other police authorities to “share common practice”.

### **Further Information Is Available From**

Lynn Place, Childcare Co-ordinator, Tel 01924 292782, Email [lp49@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:lp49@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk).

## Barts and The London NHS Trust

### Why Has The Trust Developed Non-Standard Childcare?

The Government's NHS Plan for England acknowledges that the biggest constraint the NHS faces today is no longer shortages of a financial nature, but shortages in human resources. The NHS is the country's largest employer and employs 5% of people working in England, and has made a commitment to set high standards in employment practice.

The '*Improving Working Lives in the NHS*' (IWL) initiative centres on the family, enabling people to combine work with parenting, though this also encompasses the wider picture including eldercare, care for dependents, and a genuine acknowledgement that staff have commitments outside of the workplace. The main aim of IWL is linked to three 'R's':

- ✓ Recruit - bring more people into the NHS
- ✓ Retention - encouraging more staff to stay in the NHS, for longer
- ✓ Return - make it easier and more attractive for staff to return.

Within this context, Barts and the London NHS Trust set up an initiative to provide a range of affordable high quality facilities that would assist in meeting the varied childcare needs of staff to enable them to successfully combine work with family commitments, and to help the Trust to recruit and retain staff and reduce the high costs associated with vacancy / turnover and sickness rates.

### What Non-Standard Childcare Services Are Offered?

The range of services offered includes:

- two workplace nurseries
- holiday play schemes
- a childminding network
- work life balance training for staff with families
- flexible working training for managers
- a 'keep in touch' scheme for women on maternity leave
- a 'welcome back' pack for women returning from maternity leave
- advocacy for parents wanting to explore flexible working options
- advice on Working Tax Credit and other government benefits
- assistance on all childcare issues, ranging from finding childcare to dealing with difficult teenagers

### Nursery Provision

The Trust started its childcare provision in 1999 when the first nursery was set up. It subsequently expanded this nursery and developed a new 43-place nursery on a second hospital site, which opened in 2003 with 15 children. The two on-site nurseries are both contracted out to *Buffer Bear*<sup>4</sup>. One is based at the Royal London Hospital (RLH) and the other in St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The RLH nursery has been open for 4 years, and offers 64 places for children aged 3 months to 5 years old. There are 12 nursery staff. Both nurseries open from 7am - 6pm, Monday to Friday. Weekend and overnight childcare is not routinely provided, but flexible childcare arrangements can be made for parents working on shifts or on emergency duties. If there is space, the nurseries can also take a child while its parents are engaged on emergency duties. They aim to offer a high standard of childcare, and supporting services, such as providing nappies, bottles of milk, etc. The staff work closely with all children and have monthly reviews with parents about their children's development and activities. The aim is to offer a fun and exciting day for children, as well as learning.

### The Holiday Play Scheme

This was set up in 2001. In February 2002 the Trust set up a formal partnership with the *Thresholds Project* (funded by *The Peabody Trust*) to ensure the continuation of the existing holiday play scheme of 22 places for children aged 4½ to 12, and this has run every school holiday since. To provide more choice and better accessibility to parents, the Trust has also worked with the City of London EYDCP<sup>5</sup> in promoting another play scheme, which opened in Easter 2003 for children aged 5 to 11.

### The Childminding Network

This network was established in February 2002 with the assistance of the Daycare Trust. Fifteen registered childminders have signed up to be part of Barts and The London NHS Trust Childminding Network. They are able to offer 'out of hours care' and a 'pick up from nursery service', and generally offer greater flexibility than a nursery can.

### The Childcare Co-ordinator Post

The Trust has a Childcare Coordinator who promotes awareness of the non-standard childcare options through an internal web site. A 'Keep in Touch' scheme started in April 2002 for those on maternity leave and the Trust newsletter is mailed out on a monthly basis. On return from maternity leave, all staff now receive a welcome pack, with childcare vouchers and information on the childcare facilities and benefits available, plus gifts of aromatherapy products and chocolates.

### Other Support for Employees who are Parents

In association with '*Parents at Work*', the Trust has also established courses for employees (running since April 2002) on 'Managing Flexible Working', 'Managing the Work Life Balance', and 'Positive Parenting'. Parents are also provided with help and advice on finding childcare, advocacy services on flexible working,

<sup>4</sup> Buffer Bear is mainly a non-profit making organisation with a network of about 40 nurseries. Some of them are in partnership with large organisations such as NHS Trusts, and some are neighbourhood nurseries. Its homepage is at [www.bufferbear.co.uk](http://www.bufferbear.co.uk).

<sup>5</sup> Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

details of government benefits and how to claim them, and advice on the Trust's 'Fee Direct' scheme, whereby parents can pay for a place in the Trust's nurseries before tax and national insurance.

### Services The Trust Does Not Currently Offer

The Trust does not supply evening and weekend nursery-based childcare as it feels there is insufficient demand. It does not run after school clubs, because of the widely dispersed geographical locations in which children attend school.

### **Who Uses The Services?**

The users of the non-standard hours childcare services can be anyone employed by the Trust, including doctors, nurses and all the supporting staff. Approximately 30% of the users are lone parents.

Parents on low incomes have been able to use the services through the Trust's provision of subsidised places, achieved through savings on Employer's National Insurance contributions. This is available to any employees of the Trust. A 'points system' is used to allocate parents a nursery place, and the 'first come, first served' principle is used for places on holiday schemes.

### **How Are The Services Funded?**

Securing financial resources has been challenging. The funding has been pieced together from a variety of sources – the Department of Health, Tower Hamlets EYDCP, The Barts and The London Charitable Foundation, North East London Workforce Development Confederation, and the Peabody Trust.

The set-up costs of the non-standard hours childcare provision included:

- £308k for the 50-place nursery based in The Royal London Hospital (opened November 1999) and a further 83k to extend the nursery by a further 14 places in April 2003
- £325k for the 43-place nursery based in St. Bartholomew's Hospital (opened April 2003)
- on-going revenue costs of about £60k p.a. to subsidise the nurseries
- £33k p.a. revenue costs for the Childcare Co-ordinator post
- £9k p.a. revenue costs for the holiday playscheme
- No set-up costs for the childminders network (Trust staff costs included in the Childcare Co-ordinator post); the network was set up between the Trust and Tower Hamlets EYDCP.

Affordability is seen as the key to successful childcare services, and the Trust feels it has led the field in the way it has provided subsidies for nursery places using National Insurance savings generated by the 'Fee Direct' scheme. Using this scheme has enabled the nurseries to reduce the amount of subsidy provided.

Parents pay via two schemes: the *Working Tax Credit Scheme* and the *Salary Sacrifice Scheme*. The Trust feels that by introducing the 'Fee Direct' scheme in the nurseries, it has enabled parents to make significant savings on the cost of a place (the usual cost of a place for a baby is about £170 a week – with Fee Direct parents pay about £115 a week).

### **How Does The Trust Benefit?**

All the childcare services offered are designed to help staff at what can be complicated times in their lives, such as returning from maternity leave or negotiating flexible working with their manager, allowing them to achieve a proper work life balance. The employer sees many benefits:

- staff are happier and more productive when at work
- staff take less time off sick
- the Trust can more easily recruit and retain the staff it requires
- the Trust can reduce its use of temporary staff
- the Trust believes there is a direct beneficial effect on services and on the quality of care given to NHS patients.

Parents generally view the non-standard hours childcare provision as very good. The services are valued because by offering a range of different services, the needs of everyone who has children are met. Thus, while the nurseries only provide services for young children, the holiday play schemes offer care for older children.

#### **Comments from parents**

*'I couldn't have returned to work without the nursery being available, because of the hours I work and living far away. Ella is happy and stimulated interacting with children of her own age.'* (Nurse)

*'Having a nursery on site has been extremely helpful to me, particularly being a mother of 2 young children. It has made working full-time possible, given me peace of mind and with the help of the Working Tax Credit, has made it financially possible.'* (Biomedical scientist)

*'Fee Direct made it worthwhile for me to return to work. Before this, childcare was an enormous sacrifice.'* (Radiologist)

*'The holiday play scheme has meant that two nurses have been able to come to work who would otherwise have taken annual leave. Without them we would have used bank nurses at additional cost.'* (Senior children's nurse)

#### **Further Information Is Available From**

Nicola Lindsay, Work Life Balance Manager, Barts and The London NHS Trust, Human Resources Directorate, 1st Floor Preasot Street, London E1 8PR, Tel 020 7480 4822.



## National Childminding Association (NCMA) Children Come First Childminding Networks

### Why Has NCMA Developed Childminding Networks?

NCMA has developed an innovative approach to flexible childcare, using their *Children Come First (CCF)* childminding networks' quality assurance scheme. This method is particularly suited to creating tailor-made networks that can meet the demands of employers needing to offer childcare solutions to suit the specific needs of their staff working non-standard hours.

By adapting the general childcare provision childminders provide, NCMA have used their members to create a flexible, tailor-made solution to childcare for a wide variety of employers and employees, based on their existing organisational practices, and meeting Ofsted requirements, described below.

To become a childminder in England (for children under eight), it is a requirement to register with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted); individuals must:

- attend a childminding pre-registration briefing session
- complete and return the Ofsted childminding application pack
- apply to the Criminal Records Bureau for a police check
- complete an Ofsted home inspection and suitable person interview
- attend introductory childminding training and first aid course
- pay £14 to register.

The National Childminding Association (NCMA) is the national charity and membership organisation representing registered childminders in England and Wales. NCMA works in partnership with the Government and the Welsh Assembly, local authorities, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs), Ofsted and other childcare organisations.

As a member of NCMA, individuals receive:

- a members' handbook of advice and information
- a quarterly magazine
- free legal advice, representation and freephone information helplines
- details of local NCMA childminding groups
- access to Public Liability Insurance cover.

The NCMA has developed Quality Standards of good practice that all childminder members must adhere to, including rules on safety, nutrition, managing children's behaviour, equal opportunities, and good business practice.

NCMA has also devised two quality assurance schemes: one for the approved childminding networks - **Children Come First (CCF)**; and one for individual childminders, **Quality First**, both of which are endorsed by the Sure Start Unit.

Children Come First networks can be subsidised by employers or other organisations, including EYDCPs and Sure Start programmes, or from other funding, such as European money. The subsidising body can, in agreement with NCMA, set the individual focus of that network, so for example, a particular police force can have its own childminding network which focuses on providing flexible, non-standard hours childcare for their staff, thus helping to ease issues that employers face such as recruitment and retention difficulties. It is suggested that staff may perform more efficiently, and more consistently, when their childcare needs are met, and it is easier to retain experienced staff when there is reliable childcare on offer.

### **What Is A CCF Childminding Network?**

NCMA have developed a quality assurance model for registered childminding networks that not only provides a quality assurance mark, but can also be tailored to suit the needs of a particular workforce or local labour market. *Children Come First* childminding networks can be structured to serve the differing needs of individual areas and the funding bodies or sponsoring employers involved, such as the provision of atypical hours care. NCMA can directly line-manage the specific childcare co-ordinators in their own workplace, if necessary.

#### The Childminding Network

A Children Come First (CCF) childminding network is an NCMA approved group of registered childminders who are assessed, recruited and monitored by a designated network co-ordinator. The CCF networks were developed by NCMA in partnership with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Ofsted.

For a network to become an approved Children Come First network, all childminders in the network must practice according to the standards set out in the Quality Childminding Charter, including:

- working in partnership with parents / families
- equality of opportunity / anti-discrimination
- confidentiality
- keeping children safe
- nutrition and diet
- continuity
- business practice
- support and liaison.

The network co-ordinator is responsible for:

- assessing and regularly monitoring all childminders within the network
- ensuring the childminders receive all the appropriate training they need

- providing a link between parents and childminders
- operating a toy library and equipment loaning scheme
- offering childminders guidance and supervision
- encouraging peer support.

### Emergency Childcare

Emergency care is provided to parents by each childminder having another childminder as back-up. If this also falls through, however, the network co-ordinator will often assist parents to find an emergency childminder place within the network, when needed. This is particularly valuable for staff working non-standard hours who might otherwise have difficulty in arranging suitable care.

### New Areas of Development

A home childcarers scheme allows registered childminders to care for children in the child's own home, working to a Code of Practice devised by the Department for Education and Skills. As part of the approval process, new home childcarers will have to be interviewed by an Ofsted inspector, and could then continue to operate within a CCF network, whilst offering the flexibility of homecare to parents, if desired. This development is likely to be of particular use for parents who may have to work twilight hours or overnight shifts, where their child can then be cared for in their own home until the parent returns.

### **Who Uses The Services?**

The numbers of current approved CCF networks across the country includes local authorities, colleges, police forces, and NHS trusts. The flexibility of the CCF approach has lent itself well to be adopted to suit the specific non-standard hours childcare needs of parents working in, for instance, the emergency services, healthcare fields, educational institutions, or shift-working factories.

Examples of organisations currently operating a CCF network include:

- Avon and Somerset Police
- City of York Council
- Leeds City Council
- Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
- Cumbria County Council
- Hampshire County Council.

### **Example of a CCF network in operation: City of York Council**

The City of York Children Come First childminding network was set up in December 2000, and has gradually expanded since then. It is run by two members of staff who each support twenty childminders in the network (the network is for forty childminders, and is currently almost full). One of the childminders is registered as a home child carer, who is also prepared to offer twilight hours' care, with five childminders belonging to the network also registered to offer overnight care. Around one tenth of the childminders are willing to offer early morning, evening, or weekend care, with examples of families regularly using this provision, for instance, a couple where both members work shifts within the NHS. In the past, a £300-£500 bursary (depending on the area) was available for childminders who wanted to begin offering overnight care to help them with the cost of extra resources that might be needed, such as beds, bedding or towels.

The childcare team try to encourage the childminders to think flexibly about the services that they can provide. The co-ordinator felt that increasingly childminders have to respond to the communities they live in, and the needs of the workforce there, for example if shift work is common in the area. The City of York network is open for everyone to use in the area, with information available via the local CIS.

Most demand for non-standard hours childcare provision in York comes from NHS staff, factory workers, for example in the chocolate factories in the city, and Social Services, though this demand is not regular. The Social Services department within the council can use non-standard hours provision to meet the needs of particular client groups, such as lone parents planning to return to full-time education or training, or parents wanting to attend addiction support groups, run during the evening. In this case, the council pay for the childcare provision.

The co-ordinator has liaised with the local NHS trust's childcare co-ordinator after a survey of NHS staff needs highlighted the shortage of twilight hours childcare provision in the area. It has been suggested that the trust fund a bursary to encourage more childminders to take-up evening and overnight care (as was the case in the past), in order to fit the needs of NHS workers, though this idea has not yet come to fruition.

Finances for the network come from the Early Years Service within the Council bidding for LEA funds, to cover the salaries of the members of staff involved. The cost of the actual childminder is the responsibility of each individual parent.

The main benefit for users of the network, as the co-ordinator saw it, is that the childminders get close support from the network co-ordinators, thereby adding extra reassurance on quality for the parents.

### **How Are CCF Networks Funded?**

A sponsoring employer or organisation wanting to operate a CCF network to meet their staff's childcare needs does so by subsidising the cost to fund a network co-ordinator's salary. Individual childminders in the network remain self-employed and negotiate their pay with parents; a childminder should not be any more expensive because they are part of a CCF network. In addition, the government has funded EYDCPs to set up 450 CCF networks around the country by the end of 2004.

## Who Benefits From CCF Childminding Networks?

### Employers and sponsoring bodies

Employers and subsidising bodies benefit from ensuring good quality, flexible childcare, aimed to suit the needs of their staff / client group, especially of use for those wanting atypical hours care. Childminding networks can improve an employers' work-life balance for staff, and can be tailored to meet their particular needs, such as college opening hours, or the needs of teenage parents wanting to return to education or employment. NCMA state: "Children Come First childminding networks are a cost effective option with minimal capital outlay."

Local authorities are also required to extend the availability of childcare places, to meet current Government strategy.

### Parents

Parents benefit from the advantages of using childminders as a source of formal childcare:

- childminders can care for more than one sibling
- childminders can continue to care for the child/children from a very young age, until teenage years
- the small groups childminders can care for means that the child/children receive more individual attention, or have their specific requirements more easily met, such as vegetarian cooking
- childminders can be accredited to provide early years education
- childminders are likely to be based within the same area as the family so can take to the child to local toddler groups, etc.

Childminders can also be sponsored to be 'community childminders'; that is, minding children with particular needs, for example offering respite care, or childcare within families that have been identified as vulnerable.

### Childminders belonging to a CCF network

Childminders benefit from the regular client group work that the network enables. They also receive the benefits of a CCF network which include:

- regular support and monitoring from the network co-ordinator
- access to appropriate training and funding resources
- a toy library and equipment loaning scheme
- a peer support network.

## Further information is available from

Diane Bell, North Regional Office Childminding Network Co-ordinator, NCMA, Unit 1 Antler Complex, Bruntcliffe Way, Morley, Leeds LS27 0JG, Tel 0113 218 9292, Email [ncma.north@ncma.org.uk](mailto:ncma.north@ncma.org.uk).

Julie West, Childminding Network Co-ordinator, City of York Council, Early Years Service, Mill House, North Street, York YO1 6JD, Tel 09104 554629, Mob 07734 734064, Email [julie.west@york.gov.uk](mailto:julie.west@york.gov.uk).

## Further Information

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