



**Childcare Needs of  
Southern Housing  
Group Tenants  
Research Findings  
*April 2013***



# Contents



Section		Page
	Executive Summary	3
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Research Methodology	4
3.	National Policy Priorities And Good Practise Around Childcare Provision	5
4.	Childcare Funding for SHG and Residents	10
6.	Findings from the Focus Groups	13
7.	Conclusions	15
8.	Recommendations	16
Appendix 1	SHG Tenant Focus Groups	18
Appendix 2	SHG Staff Focus Group	21

## Abbreviations

**SHG** Southern Housing Group  
**SERD** Social Economic Regeneration Department  
**DfE** Department for Education

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# Executive summary

- i. This report presents the key findings from research commissioned by the Social and Economic Regeneration Department (SERD) of Southern Housing Group (SHG). The purpose of the research was to establish the degree to which childcare is a barrier to employment, and practical ways SHG can support residents to overcome the barrier. The work was undertaken by Paul Bragman, a community and economic regeneration consultant. It has involved a robust methodology that included a combination of desk-based research, document review, listening, engaging and involving SHG tenants and staff.
- ii. SERD currently delivers a range of community and economic development activity to SHG tenants. However, with the rapid and profound changes in Welfare Reform, economic and public spending reductions, for SERD to continue to support residents access employment will require some practical measures to ensure their residents are equipped to manage their childcare options.
- iii. This research highlights that paying for childcare is extremely important for SHG resident's trying to access employment. Costs for childcare are increasing, while household income is reducing. This adds pressure to parents and carers due to a combination of cost of living increases, salary stagnation and benefit changes. In addition to this, SHG tenants don't always know what childcare is available, and childcare that is available is not always flexible to meet their childcare needs.
- iv. For SERD there is a need to focus on promoting and supporting available childcare, ensuring information about childcare gets through to residents and they utilise the childcare that is currently available. In addition to this, there is a need to encourage and support flexible childcare for residents who do shift work or who work seasonally. There is also a need to support residents who work part time and are finding it increasingly difficult to pay for childcare, due to a lack of disposable income.
- v. SHG could undertake a range of measures to assist SHG tenants overcome childcare barriers and access employment, these include:
  - Identify key wards with high concentrations of SHG housing stock with young families and map existing childcare provision.
    - Ensure families are informed about childcare provision in the area and the childcare options available to them.
    - Make links to schools and children's centre's to support them to provide information about childminders/playgroups/after school clubs/provision and places for SHG residents.
  - Identify childminders in SHG housing stock by bringing them together and looking at ways they can be supported as small businesses. SHG should also support childminders build links, relationship and market their services to SHG residents.
  - Use the mapping exercise to identify areas with a lack of childcare provision. Explore ways of developing partnerships with existing after school organizations to identify ways SHG can support them so they can become more accessible to SHG residents.
  - Explore ways to use SHG community centres to support the development of childcare provision.
  - Explore the possibility of developing a Childcare Training Centre in an existing SHG community centre. SHG could look to develop and train SHG tenants to become self-employed child minders who travel around and provide childminding services in SHG community centres or on their own estate/ neighbourhood where they live.
  - Link to existing childcare training and develop childcare training opportunities for SHG residents.
  - Develop no cost childcare support by assisting residents develop informal shared childcare networks.
  - Establish the extent to which SHG residents are involved with shift work and need support with childcare.
  - Explore ways to support SHG tenants in financial difficulty.
  - Develop concrete ways to support parents and carers prepare for the changes to the benefits when their children reach 5 years old.
  - Define part of SHG Working Opportunities Grants Programme for childcare
  - Use the findings from this research to influence Government

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

The Coalition Government has embarked on its Welfare Reforms and reductions in public spending, while also making a number of commitments to support families with young children. Finding the right kind of childcare which makes a return to work financially viable is a key issue for SHG residents. This was highlighted in the SHG Employment & Training Research in September 2008 and is re-enforced by existing research. A key challenge for SHG, is clarifying their role in supporting SHG residents address key childcare barriers.

## 1.2 Introduction

SHG is one of Southern England's largest housing associations. It owns and manages 25,000 homes with more than 66,000 residents. It employs 900 people and works with 70 local authorities. SHG commissioned research into childcare in recognition of the significant barrier childcare can play with access employment and training opportunities. This report will research the policy priorities around childcare, the extent to which childcare is a barrier for SHG residents to access work and practical ways that SHG can support its residents overcome the barrier and access employment. It will highlight a number of issues facing SHG tenants around accessing childcare. The findings and

recommendations will be used to highlight how SHG can address the childcare issues facing its tenants.

## 1.3 Approach

The research process was carried out during January-April 2013 by Paul Bragman, a community and economic regeneration consultant.

*The objective of the research was to:*

- *Understand the extent to which childcare is a barrier to work and consequently how SHG can support residents to overcome that barrier.*
- *Understand the current landscape of childcare provision e.g. the range of opportunities, provision, funding, models of provision and constraints.*
- *Engage with a sample of SHG residents to understand their issues, challenges with childcare and what they want from childcare to enable them to access employment support.*
- *Produce a report that highlights opportunities for SHG to support their residents with childcare, identify potential funding streams that are relevant and for which SHG may be eligible to apply.*

The resulting material was collated and analysed and forms the basis for a number of key recommendations at the end of this report.

# 2. Research Methodology

## 2.1 Overall Approach

The approach to the research into childcare needs of SHG tenants involved a combination of desk-based research of key policy priorities in relation to childcare, followed by detailed focus group discussions with SHG tenants and SHG staff.

## 2.2 Detailed Methodology

The methodology is set out below.

### *I. Contextual Review*

An analysis of key policy priorities was undertaken, together with a review of available research and policy documentation.

### *II. Resident focus groups*

Three focus groups with SHG residents took place in

areas of high concentration of SHG housing stock. These areas were Tower Hamlets, Hackney and the Isle of Wight. The focus group discussions concentrated on SHG resident's issues and challenges with childcare. They also looked at the extent to which childcare is a barrier to work and how SHG can support residents to overcome key barriers.

### *III. SERD Staff focus groups*

Two focus groups were held with SHG staff to outline the purpose of the research, update staff on progress, and understand their experiences of childcare needs amongst SHG residents. The focus group with staff also involved sharing the findings of the research and discussions around the emerging themes and recommendations.

# 3. National policy priorities and good practice around childcare

## 3.1 The National Context and Policy Priorities

Childcare is inextricably linked to the Coalition Government's plans to reform the benefits system and reduce public spending. Childcare policies are mostly concentrated on finding ways to increase maternal employment and close the development gap in children from different backgrounds. There are a number of key policy priorities, reports and drivers which SHG needs to take into account when clarifying potential childcare support to residents in order to support them to access employment and training.

The 1998 National Childcare Strategy sought through a mixed economy of childcare to provide 'good quality childcare provision in every neighbourhood', and to ensure that this provision was accessible to the most disadvantaged communities and families. Sure Start was launched in 1998 as the largest government early education programme then in operation. It was, run by local partnerships for children under four years old in targeted areas of deprivation, designed to coordinate and streamline health, education and welfare services and to reduce social exclusion. By the end of the national programme, 524 Sure Start Local Programmes were reaching up to 400,000 children, including a third of children under four living in poverty.

The Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative created 45 000 new childcare places in disadvantaged areas by 2004. Places were targeted at reducing unemployment and meeting the needs of parents entering the job market, especially lone parents. The aim was that by the end of the funding, the nurseries would be financially self-sufficient. Neighbourhood Nurseries have since been rolled up into Sure Start Children's Centres. The 2006 Childcare Act required local authorities for the first time to secure (although not necessarily provide) sufficient childcare for working parents. An updated strategy document published in 2009 reflected on progress since 2004 and proposed a number of new policies aimed at achieving the objectives set out in the ten-year Childcare Strategy (HM Government, 2009).

In 2006, free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds was first piloted. The entitlement aimed to improve disadvantaged children's social and cognitive outcomes so that by the age of five they were as ready as their more advantaged peers to start and benefit fully from school. The programme also aimed to provide good quality early education combined with support for parents, for example, to improve their confidence in supporting their children's learning and to deal with other problems in their lives, such as health problems or family difficulties.

Over the years, a complex range of subsidies and initiatives have influenced the shape of local childcare provision. In the years following the National Childcare Strategy, supply side subsidies usually took the form of pump-priming and were intended to assist childcare providers with initial start-up costs, with capital funding also available from some programmes, for example, Sure Start and the Single Regeneration Budget. Underpinning this funding was the belief that childcare services should become businesses and, after initial financial assistance, become financially viable and raise their income from parents as well as other sources such as employers and charities.

Children's Centres built on other integrated early education initiatives like Sure Start Local Programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and Early Excellence Centres. Those Centres in the most disadvantaged areas offer an extended range of services (access to early education provision, integrated early education and childcare, health services, family support and Jobcentre Plus services and support to childminders) for children under five and their families. The aim was that by 2010 there would be 3,500 children's centres, 'one for every community.'

Two additional recent developments relevant to childcare in disadvantaged areas are the Nutbrown review, and the introduction of a slimmed down Early Years Foundation Stage: The Nutbrown Review is part of a range of measures to improve early education and childcare, especially for disadvantaged young children. Evidence shows a clear link between a highly qualified and skilled workforce and children's healthy development (Nutbrown 2012).

The Department for Education (DfE 2012) evidence shows that making a difference to children's achievement in the early years is critical. Children who start off in the bottom 20 per cent of attainment at the Early Years Foundation Stage profile aged five are six times more likely to be in the bottom 20 per cent at Key Stage 1. In response to this evidence the government is introducing a slimmed-down version of the Early Years Foundation Stage which will free up professionals to spend more time working with children helping them to develop and introduce a two-year-old check to ensure parents are properly engaged in their child's development. Building on the findings from the original evaluation, the government proposes: That places are more strictly targeted at disadvantaged children; Local authorities focus their efforts on building capacity in higher quality settings (or improving quality in lower quality settings).

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### 3.2 Review of existing research, reports relevant information relating to childcare provision.

Quality Childcare Improving Early Years Childcare (Policy Exchange 2013) highlights that the UK has a range of different funding systems, run by different departments, and at times there can be tensions between what different policies are trying to achieve. An assessment of children's development carried out at the age of five, and published by the DfE, highlights only 56% of children from the poorest 30% of areas are achieving a good level of development, compared to 68% of those in other areas. The poorest children are the equivalent of 16 months behind those in the highest income

families.

The report highlights that parents in poorer families are less likely than their better off counterparts to choose a childcare provider based on quality; instead they are constrained by low incomes and have to choose an affordable provider. The report goes on to emphasise the importance of well trained, qualified providers in ensuring the quality of childcare provision. However the level of professionalization in the sector is relatively low, with only 10% of childminders and 23% of daycare staff holding a qualification above an A-level equivalent

The report states that more women are economically inactive due to family responsibilities than men. A large number of those not working, or working part time, would like to enter paid employment or increase their hours, but one of the major barriers was being able to find and afford childcare. Other issues at stake, most importantly quality and convenience; if parents are not able to access childcare around their work, or do not believe it is high quality they are likely to be less willing to use it.

As part of the report people were asked if those who were currently unemployed would like to be working, and 70% of women said yes. However, when asked to select barriers to employment that they faced, and 47% of women chose being able to afford childcare, almost the same level as those who said being able to find a suitable job opportunity (48%). This goes to show that for the unemployed, paying for childcare is as important an issue as finding a job. Additionally almost half (49%) of those who said they would like to be working more hours said that they wouldn't be able to pay for the additional childcare. The earlier time and money are invested in a child's development, the higher 'returns' you can get. By stopping problems before they emerge you can save on more costly interventions to address these problems later in life.

One of the main factors parents consider when choosing childcare is the quality of providers. The reasons that parents give for using informal care (overwhelmingly care provided by grandparents) includes: free provision and because they knew their child would be in a safe and loving environment, and that was completely essential to them. 81% of parents using informal care said that they did so because they trusted the provider

Quality of care is important to parents when choosing a childcare provider. Factors such as trusting the provider and knowing their child is in a caring environment matter. It is worth noting that more parents using childminders highlighted concern with the care given as a factor than those using a day nursery (81% compared to 67%), while those using a day nursery were more likely to highlight the fact that their child could be educated than those using a childminder (43% compared to 23%).

The DfE's parental survey highlighted that the pri-

mary reason for choosing a certain type of childcare provider was 'reputation'. Given that the most common way to find out about childcare was through word of mouth (with 46% of parents doing so).

Their polling found that the largest number of parents (62%) chose 'location' as their reason for choosing their main provider, and 29% of parents listed the fact that the hours were flexible with their work as a factor. For all the parents surveyed by the DfE about their reasons for choosing different providers cost was a feature, but not the primary one. 22% of parents of children under two said economic factors were their reason for choosing the provider while reputation (64%) and convenience (59%) were much more significant. People are not motivated by price alone when looking for childcare, ensuring that the care is of the right quality and fits in with their working lives is more important.

Given that 83% of parents work hours that vary from week to week flexible childcare is really important. Research from the Daycare Trust has found that parents who work atypical hours are very dependent on informal care, partly because it will be available after nursery opening hours. However it is also that when work patterns change weekly, many nurseries are unable to offer different packages of care on a weekly basis, meaning that parents would need to pay for full time care to ensure all their shifts were covered.

Paying to work: Childcare and child poverty (Barnados) highlights that the prohibitive cost of childcare in the UK, which is higher than in other European countries, may impact on demand because it restricts access to those who need it most. The Daycare Trust survey revealed that the typical cost of a full-time nursery place for a child under two is £142 a week in England, over £7300 a year; a rise of 27% in five years. In London, the average price is £197 a week for a child under two, which is over £10,000 a year. (source: Daycare Trust Childcare Costs Survey 2006, [www.daycarustrust.org.uk](http://www.daycarustrust.org.uk))

Home-Work: Helping London's Social Tenants into Employment (2012). The Centre for London report considers what could be done to get more social housing tenants into work. It makes lots of interesting points, including the particular difficulty in London for single mothers to find jobs that reward them enough to take. It highlights that a smaller proportion of women work in London than elsewhere in the UK, and an even smaller proportion of single mothers work. This has been a longstanding pattern and there is strong evidence that it is to be explained by the difficulty of accessing childcare in the capital. Childcare is up to a third more expensive in London than elsewhere in the UK, with parents paying an average of £119 a week for a child aged under two. One survey found that the average family in the South East of England spends 40% of its income on childcare and travel costs compared to 26% for the average UK family. Moreover, childcare

in London appears to be becoming more expensive, with hourly costs for a child under two increasing, between 2011 and 2012, by 5.8% (and by 3.9% for a child over two), when wages have risen by only 0.3%. But for London parents, and in particular, London single parents, high hourly childcare costs are compounded by other problems.

The relative shortage of part-time or flexible work in London results in London's single parents being much less likely in part time work than UK single parents. The relative shortage of part-time work is a particularly issue for people with care responsibilities, including single parents. Studies show that childcare provision often fails to meet the needs of London parents. Most childcare providers offer a daytime-only service, and cater first and foremost for parents who work full-time or near full-time, and regular hours. Yet Londoners are more likely to have to have long journeys to and from work, and work irregular hours and so need access to flexible childcare that is not limited to the 'normal' working day. Added to this Londoners have weaker family support networks for childcare.

The report suggests social landlords could do two things:

First, one of the key problems in providing childcare in London is the cost of renting suitable premises. Yet many social landlords can make premises available – for example, disused garages, workshops, laundrettes and shops. Housing associations will also have the business and administrative skills necessary to convert properties and run the business side of childcare services. Second, parents tend to want childcare to be provided very locally, and there is at least anecdotal evidence that local services can be hard to come by in poor areas with high numbers of social tenants. Housing associations are well positioned to provide very local services.

The Minister for Children, Liz Truss has noted that the level of red tape for childcare in this country is much higher than on the continent. The excessive amount of regulation is to blame for the shortage. The statutory requirement is three children per child minder. In countries such as Sweden and France the ratio is higher. The low ratio we have makes childminding a low paid job even though the charges are high. It has the unintended consequence of reducing quality by reducing competition.

Counting the Costs of Childcare Vidhya Alakeson Alex Hurrell (October 2012) highlights that over the last decade, the affordability of childcare as a percentage of disposable family income has improved for most families, although costs remain among the highest in the OECD. In the UK, second earners lose 68 pence of every additional pound earned through tax, National Insurance and childcare costs compared to an OECD average of 52%. Given the mix of universal and means tested support available for childcare, families at differ-

ent points in the income distribution face very different childcare costs. The withdrawal of benefits and tax credits as income increases means that it is possible for childcare costs to account for a very small percentage of disposable family income but still have a significant negative impact on work incentives. In a minimum wage earning couple, the second earner pays to work for the first 16 hours because the family is not eligible for childcare support (although this will change with the introduction of Universal Credit). For each additional pound the second earner earns after 16 hours, the family loses almost the same again, leaving the family's disposable income flat. The family is almost no better off if the second earner works full time or not at all.

Childcare Sufficiency and Sustainability in Disadvantaged Areas Dfe Nat Cen Social Research - has found that sustainable childcare provision in disadvantaged areas needs to be publicly funded in one form or another. Childminders in these areas may respond to market demand to a certain extent but many parents in disadvantaged areas perceive childminders as a less attractive option than group based care.

### 3.3 Key themes emerging from these policy priorities, reports and research:

- *Making a difference to children's achievement in the early years is critical.*
- *Children who start off in the bottom 20% of attainment at the Early Years Foundation Stage are six times more likely to be in the bottom 20% at Key Stage 1.*
- *The earlier time and money are invested in a child's development, the higher 'returns' you can get.*
- *83% of parents work flexibly and need flexible childcare.*
- *The cost of childcare has increased by 27% in the last 5 years.*
- *For the unemployed, paying for childcare is as important an issue as finding a job.*
- *Childcare is up to a third more expensive in London than elsewhere in the UK, with parents paying an average of £119 a week for a child aged under two*
- *The average family in the South East of England spends 40% of its income on childcare and travel costs compared to 26% for the average UK family.*
- *A smaller proportion of women work in London than elsewhere in the UK and an even smaller proportion of single mothers work.*
- *Childcare in London appears to be becoming more expensive, with hourly costs for a child under two increasing, between 2011 and 2012, by 5.8% (and by 3.9% for a child over two), when wages have risen by only 0.3%.*
- *The shortage of part-time or flexible work in London's means single parents are much less likely than UK single parents to be in part-time work, across all types of housing. The relative shortage of part-time work weighs particularly on people with care responsibilities, including single parents.*

- *Quality of care is important to parents when choosing a childcare provider.*
- *22% of parents of children under two from a Dfe survey said economic factors were their reason for choosing the provider while reputation (64%) and convenience (59%) were much more significant.*

### **3.4 Models of childcare provision that also offer employment opportunities for residents.**

The UK childcare sector is fragmented, with the range of childcare including childminders, day nurseries schools and classes, playgroups and out of school clubs and holiday schemes. Early education for children under the age of three is delivered mainly by private providers, including childminders, and a growing number of voluntary sector providers.

- Childminding is a widely used form of childcare for young children. Childminders are self-employed and negotiate the terms and conditions of the care they provide directly with parents. Parents are usually charged on an hourly basis for the amount of childcare they require. Childminders work in their own homes and are usually mothers themselves. They may offer the service throughout the day and over the whole year.
- Day nurseries cater for pre-school children and are a common form of childcare for working parents. Children can attend part-time or full-time. They are run by private companies, individuals as sole traders or partnerships, by local authorities, or by voluntary, community or social enterprises. They are financed through fee income, grants or a combination depending on the how the organisation is legally constituted.
- Out of school clubs and holiday schemes e.g. breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs. They provide sessional care for children between the parent's working day and the child's school hours. These schemes provide care during one or more of the following periods: before school, after school, weekends and during the holidays. The clubs can be based within schools and run by a separate management committee which consist of representatives from each school.
- Informal childcare (babysitters, nannies, family and friends)
- Community nurseries/ crèches/ playgroups provide affordable day care in deprived communities. Rely on fees from parents and local authority support for financial sustainability.

### **3.5 Good practise examples of housing associations involvement with childcare**

- Green light Social enterprise Case Studies Matchbox Nursery** is an independent day care nursery and social enterprise. It is based in East London on one of the estates of Poplar HARCA. The nursery works in partnership with the housing association which acts as its landlord and key supporter. Matchbox Nursery began in 2003 as the first nursery under the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative in Tower Hamlets. The nursery pays Poplar HARCA a subsidised rent of £12,000 annually for 25 years. It is run by two local residents who were already running Matchbox Nursery as a playgroup. The nursery's emphasis on local employment means that the staff, as well as the children, are beneficiaries. The nursery takes on children from age three months to five years. There are a maximum of 98 full time equivalent places and currently 135 children attend the nursery, which is in one of the 30% most deprived areas in the UK. The children come from a very wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Around 25% of children are Bangladeshi. Most of the parents are in fulltime work. Matchbox's legal structure is that of a standalone registered charity and company limited by guarantee. The trustees, are all local people who also run the playgroup on the estate's nearby community centre. The nursery also provides crèche facilities for local authority staff. They currently charge £210 per full week for under twos and £200 for over twos. The nursery has a couple of volunteers. Total turnover is £815,205 for 2011-2012 of which fees income is £805,888. Total expenditure last year was £810,560. The initial set up costs were £140,000 capital from the National Lottery plus £10,000 National Lottery money for architects. On a sliding scale for the first three years but after that they had to become self sufficient.

#### **Key success factors**

- High visibility location on the main road near to Canary Wharf
- The manager has a "hands on" financial management role and is always aware of the 'bottom line' on a month-by-month basis.
- Focus on high levels of occupancy
- Word of mouth reputation
- Tendency to accommodate changing initiatives
- Tight financial controls
- Good staff relations save recruitment costs
- 84% of staff are local
- They believe happy, well-remunerated staff are strong marketing point, boosting occupancy and maximising income.

- Old Oak HA Children's centre is a phase two cen-

which was designated in 2007, although it only became fully operational in 2009 following significant refurbishment of an existing building used as a community centre. The building now acts as both a community and also a children's centre. Hammersmith and Fulham local authority is ultimately responsible for the governance of the centre. However, the centre is managed by the board of Old Oak Housing Association, a charitable organisation, acting on behalf of the local authority. Old Oak Housing Association is part of the Family Mosaic Group; all staff at the centre are employed by this group. The centre is primarily governed by a community sub-committee of the housing association, known as the 'community development group' which is made up of representatives from the local community, parents,

councillors and partners. The committee is in essence an advisory board with a broad remit that includes overseeing community centre business as well as the children's centre services. The centre serves a diverse community and is located adjacent to HMP Wormward Scrubs on land owned by the Family Mosaic Group. The centre provides a range of services that meet its full core purpose including health support, adult courses and educational workshops. The vast majority of wards that make up the reach area are within the 10% most socially and economically deprived in the country. There are 705 children under five living in the reach area. The percentage of families with young children identified as living in poverty is 49%. Currently, 10% of families receive the childcare element of

## 4. Childcare funding for residents and SHG

4.1 In this section we review key childcare funding available directly to residents and key national and local childcare funding available to SHG through a review websites and networks relating to childcare.

### Childcare available directly to SHG residents

Support	Entitlement	
	Those In Employment	Those Not in Employment
Nursery Education Grant (NEG)/Early Years Education	<p>15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year for least disadvantaged three and four year olds, which must be offered at least as five hours over three days or three hours over five days.</p> <p>Recently extended to cover the poorest 20% of two year olds, and 40% by 2014            Certain criteria apply such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• income support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance</li> <li>• an income-related employment and support allowance</li> <li>• support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</li> <li>• Guarantee element of State Pension Credit</li> <li>• Child Tax Credit and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190.00 (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (TC 602 Final Award Notice - 2012/2013) - Not eligible if you are in receipt of Working Tax Credit.</li> </ul>	
Care to Learn (C2L)	<p>Care to Learn provides financial support to teenage parents who want to continue their education.</p> <p>Care to Learn can assist people under 20 years of age at the start of a course, with the costs of registered childcare, and travelling expenses to and from the childcare provider. If students are starting or continuing a course in September they can claim up to £175 a week towards the cost of Ofsted-registered childcare.</p> <p>Childcare payments are made directly to the childcare provider and travel payments are made to the learning provider.</p>	
Child Element of Working Tax Credit	<p>All parents under certain incomes, regardless of employment status, is entitled to Child Tax Credit, reducing according to the withdrawal rates as income increases. The Family Element of £545 is paid until parents are earning £40,000. Child Benefit is paid to all parents, with £20.30 for the eldest child and £13.40 for each additional child, although from January 2013 is now clawed back from families with one parent earning over £50,000 through taxation.</p>	

Child Element of Working Tax Credit	All parents under certain incomes, regardless of employment status, is entitled to Child Tax Credit, reducing according to the withdrawal rates as income increases. The Family Element of £545 is paid until parents are earning £40,000. Child Benefit is paid to all parents, with £20.30 for the eldest child and £13.40 for each additional child, although from January 2013 is now clawed back from families with one parent earning over £50,000 through taxation.	
Employer Supported Childcare Vouchers	£55 pw for a basic rate taxpayer, £28 for a higher rate taxpayer, £22 for an additional rate tax payer.	Not available
Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit	Up to 70% of costs covered. To be eligible, parents need to be paying for registered childcare, to be working 16 hours or more a week, and to have gross family earnings of less than £22,000 per year with one child in childcare, or less than £30,000 per year with two or more children in childcare. The childcare tax credit is paid either as money or is offset against a persons tax liability, depending on how much income tax a person pays.	Not available
Local Authority	In addition to the Sure Start funding. LAs also receive funding for ensuring sufficient childcare, enabling access for disabled children, the Graduate Leader Fund or for programmes such as 'Every Child a Talker' and the pilot offer of childcare for two year olds. There is also money allocated for capital expenditure. This funding is currently delivered through the Early Intervention Grant. The estimated figure is taken from the Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Grant figures which the EIG replaced.	
£1,200 Childcare Deal	In 2013 Budget, the Treasury announced that they will be contributing £1,200 yearly for every child to families where both parents are in work. This would also apply to single parents in work, and it should be fully implemented by 2014/15. Parents will be allowed to claim back 20% out of a total of around £6,000 - what they believe to be the average annual price of a childcare place. Initially, it will cover children up to five years old, but will build up "over time" to include all children under 12. Those on tax credits are not eligible. Parents will have to set up an online account with a voucher provider. When they buy vouchers the amount they pay is topped up by the government. Vouchers will be valid with any Ofsted regulated childcare	

## 4.2 Childcare funding available to SHG

### Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16 -24 year olds

The government is offering a grant of up to £1,500 to recruit apprentices aged 16 to 24. The £1,500 grant is in addition to the training costs of the chosen Apprenticeship framework, which are met in full for 16-18 year olds and 50% for those aged 19-24. The scheme has been extended to until 31 December 2013 and is aimed at supporting businesses to grow by employing young people through the Apprenticeship programme. Eligible employers are those who have never employed an apprentice before or who have not recruited one in the last 12 months. Subject to budget availability and the employer's commitment to support the apprentice to the end of their programme, up to ten grants can be made to any one employer.

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Employers/The-Basics.aspx>

### City Bridge Trust Programmes (London)

Makes grants for charitable projects which benefit the inhabitants of the 32 London boroughs. The funding is available to support the work of charities and voluntary and community organisations in particular where it relates to supporting people that are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Funding is available to cover both capital and revenue expenditure.

<http://www.citybridgetrust.org.uk/CBT/Grants/>

### BBC Children in Need Grant

Grants are targeted on the areas of greatest need, and money is allocated geographically to ensure that children in all corners of the UK have a fair share of the money raised. Funding is available both for capital and revenue costs. Applications should demonstrate how your project will change the lives of children for the better.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/>

### Southwest Foundation Grant Programme

The overall aim of the Foundation is to invest in communities throughout the South West Region with a view to alleviating poverty and hardship and improving the quality of life for those people. The small grants fund seeks to encourage and enable people to take

part in their communities. Community Grant Programmes. In partnership with the Learning Curve the Foundation is also managing a European Social Fund and Skills Funding Agency, jointly funded, Community Grant Programme. This Community Grant Programme is for grants up to twelve thousand pounds to enable small Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations to offer projects to support people furthest removed from the labour market to move toward employment. The projects funded are very diverse and include training programmes, advice and information provision, confidence and skills building. Previous programmes have each benefitted over 2,000 people with over 1,000 people moving onto employment, training and volunteering per programmes. Please do contact the Foundation to discuss any of these programmes <http://www.southwestfoundation.org.uk/>

### BIG Lottery Early Years Fund

The Big Lottery Fund has a new £165m programme called Fulfilling Lives - A Better Start. The initiative aims to deliver a step change in preventative approaches in pregnancy and the first three years of life to improve life chances of babies and young children.

The deadline for submissions was 22nd February.

<http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/england/fulfilling-lives-a-better-start>

### General

#### Awards for All

Awards for All is a Lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects in the UK.

<http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/>

#### Big Local

Big Local is an opportunity for residents in 150 areas around England to use at least £1m to make a massive and lasting positive difference to their communities. It's about bringing together all the local talent, ambitions, skills and energy from individuals, groups and organisations who want to make their area an even better place to live. Big Local is being run by Local Trust, which is working with £200m from the Big Lottery Fund and a range of partners providing expert advice and support for residents.

<http://www.localtrust.org.uk/big-local/>

# 5. Findings from the Focus Group

## 4.2 Childcare funding available to SHG

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<http://www.localtrust.org.uk/big-local/>

## 5.1 Introduction

This section highlights the key considerations arising from the analysis of the material from the focus groups. (Full details of all the responses are included in the Appendices). As part of the research of the extent to which childcare is a barrier to SHG residents accessing employment, focus groups were facilitated with SHG residents in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and the Isle of Wight. In addition to this, 2 focus groups were

organised with SHG staff working in the Social and Economic Regeneration Department (SERD) team. A total of 5 focus groups were organised.

The focus group discussions centred on key childcare issues. These centred on;

- *Understanding SHG residents issues and challenges with childcare.*
- *Understanding the extent to which childcare is a barrier to work for SHG residents.*
- *Understanding what SHG residents want from childcare to enable them to access employment support.*
- *Understanding how SHG can support residents to overcome key barriers.*

## **5.2 Childcare used by SHG tenants**

It was clear from the focus groups across the areas that SHG tenants use a variety of childcare. This includes family, after schools clubs and breakfast provided by the school and childminding.

On the Isle of Wight the Children's Centre plays an important role with childcare. They also serve as a community hub where residents get their information, this is particularly important as there are not many community centres that residents seem to use.

The use of childminders varied across the areas, some residents didn't use them because they didn't know much about them or trust them. They also thought they are more expensive than other childcare provision.

Childcare costs was an issue for everyone, this was particularly the case with families with more than one child needing childcare. Residents felt costs over a weekly period mount up. The focus group in Fieldgate Mansions in Tower Hamlets where there are a high proportion of Bangladeshi families and families can often larger, highlighted that childcare is often provided by family members e.g. grandparents or older siblings. When it was discussed why they are using family members for childcare, cost was a factor but also knowledge of other childcare available and trust with that childcare was a factor.

## **5.3 Important qualities of childcare for SHG residents**

Residents highlighted a number of factors that are important to them when choosing childcare. Location, cost, trust and quality were consistently highlighted across all the focus groups. The importance of their children being happy with the childcare was also highlighted alongside flexibility with hours and being responsive to shift work.

## **5.4 Issues and challenges with childcare facing SHG Tenants**

A key question that this research study set out to address was what issues and challenges do SHG tenants who are accessing employment experience.

The results of the focus group discussions re-en-

forced existing research that childcare costs have increased while income levels have reduced. This is compounded by the increases in the cost of living, particularly with food, and utilities while salary levels have remained stagnant. Some participants of the focus groups who are currently working part time and had previously payed for childcare were now reliant on family members for childcare.

However, the focus group discussions also highlighted that the changes to the benefits system and its inflexibility was not helping resident's access work. Added to this is the pressure to increase the hours worked in order to qualify for Working Tax Credit, however increasing part time hours is difficult. This is backed up by national research that highlights that those doing part-time jobs because they can't find full-time ones or wanting more hours in their current jobs has increased by 42% over the last four years to reach 3.3 million. Women are more likely to be under-employed than men, with around one in eight employed women finding themselves without enough hours (Source: Labour Force Survey <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-21363-f0.cfm>)

Added to this where residents are undertaking shift work or seasonal work childcare becomes difficult to manage and access, as does managing family tax credits and the benefits system. On the Isle of Wight seasonal work is common while across all the focus groups a number of residents highlighted that they work shift work.

On the Isle of Wight, tenants highlighted that the barriers around childcare are exacerbated by the lack of choice and higher costs of childcare while salary costs are proportionately lower compared to the mainland.

However, across the three focus groups residents were not always aware of childcare provision available to them. After school provision was in particular demand but not always available due to it being oversubscribed.

The staff focus group in particular highlighted that childcare needs are often part of multiple needs of a family. In the Bangladeshi community in particular, knowledge of childcare and trust are a particular issue as is isolation. In Fieldgate Mansions, Tower Hamlets, overcrowding is an issue, so the need for childcare provision that includes space for the children to play is of particular importance.

## **5.5 Key areas of help with childcare that would increase access to employment for SHG tenants**

When asked what would help overcome childcare barriers and increase accesses to employment responses were wide ranging. Help to inform residents about available childcare by working with the schools and existing childcare providers was highlighted across the focus groups. Establishing relationships and trust with local childminders, particularly if they are also

SHG residents was also discussed in the groups. The role of Job Centre Plus was consistently highlighted as critical to helping SHG tenants find work. There was a view that it needs to be more geared towards helping residents find meaningful work, and take into account training that is provided by non Job centre Plus training providers e.g. Housing association training, specialist

courses. Budgeting was also highlighted as an area that residents need support around particularly in light of the Welfare Reforms and economic climate and the added pressure that they are feeling. Support with transport on the Isle of Wight transport would address a particular issue.

## 6. Conclusion

**6.1 From an assessment of the policy priorities, research and feedback from the focus groups, there are a number of important issues that need to be recognised and understood in order to ensure that any intervention from SHG in childcare support is effective and sustainable.**

These issues are as follows:

### Consistent themes

- a) Childcare Information - Residents are not always aware of what childcare is available. This is particularly the case in Fieldgate Mansions where there are a number of Bangladeshi families but also in the Isle of Wight and Hackney.
- b) Increasing cost of living – The increasing cost of living e.g. food fuel, utilities alongside increasing costs of childcare has mean some parents and carers that have used childcare in the past are increasingly reliant on family to support to provide childcare. This is compounded in London where there is a lack of part time work and in the Isle of Wight where salary levels are much less than the rest of UK, while the cost of living remains comparatively high. This is also exacerbated by the reduced salary levels particularly for women in part time work.
- c) Flexibility of childcare – This is a big barrier preventing access to employment, particularly for people who do shift work or work seasonally. The issue of finding childcare when you do shiftwork was highlighted across all the focus groups however seasonal work is particularly an issue in the Isle of Wight.
- d) Changes to benefits – Changes to the benefit system are impacting on residents who are trying to access employment and identify affordable childcare. For example 21 hours use to be the threshold to qualify for Working Tax Credit for a couple with one or more children; this has now increased to 24 hours. This is proving challenging as employers are often not flexible with the hours available and there

is not enough additional work. This problem is likely to increase with Universal Credit. Added to this there is often pressure from Job Centre Plus Advisor to work more hours to reduce the benefit costs. Since October 2010 lone parents whose youngest child is 7 or over are no longer entitled to Income Support as a lone parent. It was announced in March 2012 that this age has now dropped to 5 years with immediate effect. Lone parents must now apply for Jobseeker's Allowance and have to be actively seeking employment. Lone parents who are currently in receipt of Income Support with children over 5 will be moving on to Jobseeker's Allowance during the course of 2012. This doesn't link to the £1,200 Childcare Deal announced by the Government in the 2013 Budget which is targeted at working parents.

- e) Trust and quality is very important for SHG residents to:
  - *Feel comfortable with childminder*
  - *Feel comfortable with the service*
  - *To have experience of it*
  - *Basic standard – looked after/fun/children want to go*
  - *Quality provision is important for the development of children*
- f) Parents are increasingly reliant on family members for childcare support, particularly in the Bangladeshi community where there are large families. However due to financial pressures this is also the case for all families who are working, on low income and the support is available.
- g) It is increasingly difficult for parents and carers who have variable work patterns due to shift work and seasonal work to manage their household budgets and deal with family tax credits and the benefits system.
- h) Job Centre Plus – are pushing jobs that can make parents and carers worse off. Across the focus groups parents and carers felt Job Centre Plus was not geared towards helping you find meaningful

## 6.2 Geographical specific themes

Key issues facing SHG tenants on the Isle of Wight around childcare include

- i) Transport is expensive, Buses are expensive - £3.50 one way for an adult/£1.75 for children one way.
- j) Hard to find childcare and manage benefits when working hours go up and down due to seasonal variations.
- k) Salaries are low and childcare costs are approx £135 per week. This can lead to working to pay childcare.
- l) Job market on Island is difficult – not many jobs, seasonal, low salaries matched with high cost of childcare.
- m) Inflexible benefits system
- n) Lots of people don't have computers or the confidence to use them
- o) Flexibility of childcare – This is a big barrier preventing access to employment, particularly for people who do shift work or work seasonally. Seasonal work is particularly an issue in the Isle of Wight.

# 7. Recommendations

## 7.1 Areas for Action

From the issues identified in section 6.1 it is obvious that there are a number of strands on which SHG needs to focus. These are:

1. Promoting and supporting available childcare – ensuring childcare information is getting through to residents and they are utilising the childcare that is currently available.
2. Encourage and support flexible childcare– ensuring childcare is flexible for residents who do shift work or who work seasonally.
3. Finances – supporting residents who work part time who are finding it increasingly difficult to pay for childcare and don't have disposable income.

### Recommendations

#### A. Promote and support available childcare

A.1 SHG should identify key wards with high concentrations of SHG housing stock with young families and map existing childcare provision:

- *Ensure families are informed about childcare provision in the area and the childcare options available to them.*
- *Make links to schools and children's centre's to support them to provide information about childminders/playgroups/after school clubs/provision and places for SHG residents.*

A.2 Identify childminders in SHG housing stock by bringing them together and looking at ways they can be supported as small businesses. SHG should also support childminders build links, relationship and market their services to SHG residents.

#### B. Encourage and Support Flexible Childcare Provision

SHG should look at opportunities to encourage the development of childcare provision in areas of high SHG stock with families and a lack of provision. The

support could be provided through a range of ways.

B.1 Use the mapping exercise to identify areas with a lack of childcare provision. Explore ways of developing partnerships with existing after school organizations to identify ways SHG can support them so they can become more accessible to SHG residents i.e. training, capacity building, funding etc.

B.2 Explore ways to use their community centres to support the development of childcare provision.

#### This should be community centres that:

- *Are located in areas where there is a shortage of childcare and a demand.*
- *In a good location*
- *There is an existing crèche or playgroup that could be developed into a social enterprise that provides childcare from SHG centre.*

SHG could request subsidised rent/or a rent free period and build on the knowledge and experience from existing childcare initiatives in Leyton Yard, Stamford Hill and Dalston Heights.

This childcare provision would be flexible around shift work and could be piloted in Fieldgate Mansions in Tower Hamlets.

B.5 SHG should explore the possibility of developing a Childcare Training Centre as a social enterprise. This could be in an existing SHG community centre. SHG could look to develop and train SHG tenants to become self-employed.

SHG would need to invest in space, accred-

ited managers for the centre and appropriate insurance, etc. SHG would then employ a group of apprentice child minders and be able to offer child minding services at a significantly reduced rate. Wages for the apprentice child minders would be £3.00 per hour. This would also allow those that have children and have been unable to take training because of childcare to bring their children to work. Because of the low wages while in training SHG tenants would still be able to keep certain benefits e.g. working tax credits.

The objective would be to develop a model where fees charged cover the cost of the above expenses. This would then allow SHG or to partner to draw down SFA funding to provide apprenticeship training to those on the programme.

Upon completion of their apprentice training SHG or the training provider would provide a service to advice SHG tenants on setting up their own home based childcare business as a social enterprise.

Once childminders are trained they could also travel around and provide childminding services in other centres or on their own estate/ neighbourhood where they live.

B.3 SHG should link to existing childcare training and develop training opportunities for SHG residents in childcare for SHG residents.

B.4 SHG should develop no cost childcare support by developing informal shared childcare networks. This could be through timebanks or using the speed dating model. This is an area where the barter economy already flourishes, however with a small amount of support from SHG, this could achieve more for SHG residents. This would be particularly useful

afterschool.

B.6 Establishing the extent to which their residents are involved with shift work and need support with childcare

### C. Finances

C.1 Exploring ways to support SHG in financial difficulty by

- *Subsidizing childcare for school age kids, breakfast clubs/after school activities. Either through grants to after school initiatives or supporting a family.*
- *Pilot supporting residents with budgeting, particularly around childcare e.g. how they can save money, make their money go further*
- *Support residents on the Isle of Wight with Transport takes a big portion of our weekly income – when transport is combined with childcare – that is most of our income – childcare circles*

C.2 Developing concrete ways they can support parents and carers prepare for the changes to the benefits when their children reach 5 years old

- *Help inform us on whats available*
- *A centre for children to be looked after*
- *Could use the community centre as a base*
- *Would want play to be involved and for the children to enjoy themselves*
- *Good for children to meet other children and play*
- *There is nowhere for children to play*
- *Would help with overcrowding*

C.3 Defining part of SHG Working Opportunities Grants Programme for childcare

C.4 Using the findings from this research to influence Government particularly in relation to Job Centre Plus.

# Appendix 1: SHG Tenants Focus Groups

## Focus Group at Fieldgate Mansions, Tower Hamlets

Date: 25th February 2013

Attendance: 10 people (Male: 2, Female: 8)

### What Childcare do you use?

- No attendees are working
- 7 attendees are looking for work that fits around school time
- All participants look after their own children or use relatives as don't work
- They are not using childcare because of cost and – "how will another person know how to look after my child"
- Existing childcare arrangements:
  - 1 person – children at school
  - 1 person – share childcare with wife
  - 1 person – uses a nursery, others will use a nursery as its free
- A number of people have larger families
- Older children look after the younger children
- No one is using childminders or after school activities
- Most people hear about things through word of mouth

### What are the most important factors for you when choosing childcare?

- Some people know about existing nurseries others don't
- Timings
- Education
- Professional and qualified staff is really important – so they know what they are doing
- Willing to pay – subsidized/affordable
- Nursery/crèche – there are people locally will to get involved in setting one up as will gain experience and help them get a job
- Don't know about existing childcare available
- Won't leave children in a random place if we don't know about it
- Not many places for children to go after school

### What are your issues and challenges with childcare?

- Full time job – no free time only when children are asleep
- Some people use grandparents and its a lot of work for them

### What important element does childcare need to help you access employment opportunities?

- Confidence
- word of mouth
- Endorsed by the Council

- Reputation

### SHG Help

- Help inform us on whats available
- A centre for children to be looked after
- Could use the community centre as a base
- Would want play to be involved and for the children to enjoy themselves
- Good for children to meet other children and play
- There is nowhere for children to play
- Would help with overcrowding

## Focus Group at Stamford Hill Community Centre, Hackney

Date: 5th March 2013

Attendance: 10 people (Male: 2, Female: 8)

### What Childcare do you use?

- Childminder around school times – costly £5-£9ph
- Family
- I use to pay for childcare, I can't afford to now so I use my family
- After school clubs - £5.60 per session/it's over subscribed
- Word of mouth other parents
- Learning Trust Directory- out of date
- Breakfast club – over subscribed
- I have to use friends as I do shift wok
- Take it in turns between parents

### What are the most important factors for you when choosing childcare?

- Flexible
- Engagement with carer
- Affordable
- Childcarer needs experience
- Structure
- Quality food
- Quality activities

### What are your issues and challenges with childcare?

- People who make decisions are trying to control the lives of people they have no experience of
- What women can earn has gone down – this makes it very stressful
- Prices/cost of living/vat have gone up
- Work is harder to find
- People with children are less likely to be taken on for employment as they have more responsibilities at home
- Changes to benefits have not helped – inflexible

- When children are 7 you are told you have to go to work
- Cost of childcare
- Hard if you do shift work
- Working patterns have changed, they are not 9am-5pm
- There is pressure to increase the hours you work
- 21 hours use to be the threshold for benefits, now it is 23 hours – however part time hours from employers are not flexible – fear that you will lose your job.
- Job Centre Plus are pushing jobs that make us worse off
- Job centre advisors have poor skills and manners
- young people may have qualifications but not experience and can't access jobs

#### What important elements do childcare need to help you access employment opportunities?

- Location and cost are important
- Cost
- Ofstead inspected
- Quality
- location
- Cost
- Trust
- Activities
- Trust
- Cost

#### What would help?

- Employment that covers the cost of childcare and cost of living costs
- Subsidized childcare for school age kids – breakfast clubs/after school activities
- Would also help with shift work
- Support for existing after school organizations
- More after school provision
- Job centre plus – only happy with training they put us on, often it is poor quality, they don't take outside support into account e.g. RSL training, specialist courses
- Job Centre Plus are not geared towards helping you find meaningful work, they also have an inconsistent approach
- Information
  - Schools could have a list of childminders/play-groups/after school clubs in the area
- Schools could be more proactive
- Learning Trust is not effective in neighbourhoods
- Childcare support could be coordinated on a ward basis
- Quality
  - Important to trust and feel your child is safe
  - Need to feel comfortable with childminder
  - Need to feel comfortable with the service
  - Need to have experience of it
  - Basic standard – looked after/fun/children want to go

- Cost and flexibility
  - Biggest barrier preventing access to employment
  - Shift work – childcare not flexible
  - If you work full time it is very difficult to organize child care
  - If you work part time it doesn't pay enough to pay for childcare and don't have disposable income

#### SHG Help

- Find out childminders who are SHG residents
- Promote their services to SHG residents/support them to network with each other/build links to SHG residents in their areas so they can build trust – also supporting small businesses
- SHG offer reduced rent to SHG residents who are childminders in their properties
- Train childminders, apprentices, after school clubs and support them
- We need more places like 'Mole on the Hill'
- Support parents whose children are approaching 7:
  - Inform them of the changes to income support and JSA
  - introduce them to networks and support that is available
  - Make them aware of their childcare options
  - Make them aware of courses that they can do now so when their children are 7 they are ready
  - Develop a preparation pack
- Support childcare projects in SHG facilities where there is demand, residents willing to run them
- Support with after school clubs and breakfast clubs
- Job Centre Plus
  - Should recognize SHG courses and training and outside support
- Don't forget there are dads who are also primary carers for their children

#### Focus Group Childrens Centre Isle of Wight

11th March 2013

5 people present (4 women and 1 man)

#### What Childcare do you use?

- Childrens centre is a community hub and is where we get our information about childcare
- They have lists of childminders
- Don't really have community centres
- After school clubs and breakfast clubs are linked to the schools - £4 per hour – expensive, not over subscribed – cost is an issue
- Holiday clubs are also linked to the schools
- 9am-3pm – this year there was an offer £8, other school £10 for half a day
- Family
- Worry about if our children won't fit in to existing childcare
- Never used childminders – don't know much about them or trust them – think they are more expensive

- Find out about what childcare is available through schools and nursery
- Nursery – I am happy with the setting, staff are lovely, plus my older son went there before school

What are the most important factors for you when choosing childcare?

- Location
- Safe
- Cost
- Others feedback on the setting
- That they are safe and children are happy
- Affordable
- Local
- Trained staff
- Support children with particular needs – able to work with other agencies e.g. physio, speech therapy
- Flexible hours that are responsive to shift work, care work and seasonal variations – this is a lot of Island work
- Things to keep them amused
- Safe and secure for all children
- Good equipment/toys/facilities
- I have a child with ADHD and I am worried if my daughter is not happy

What are your issues and challenges with childcare

- Transport - Buses are expensive - £3.50 one way for an adult/£1.75 for children one way
- Support with budgeting for childcare
- Working hours go up and down due to seasonal variations
  - Difficult to manage childcare
  - Difficult with family tax credits
  - Difficult with benefits
  - Variable incomes can lead to overpayments of benefits that you have to pay back and can lead to financial difficulties
- Going to be harder with Universal Credit
- Not many childcare jobs on the island
- Happiness of children
- Salaries are low and childcare costs are approx £135 per week – can lead to working to pay childcare
- Job market on Island is difficult – not many jobs, seasonal, low salaries matched with high cost of childcare
- Inflexible benefits system

- Feeling frustrated
- Lots of people don't have computers or the confidence to use them
- Can't afford a car and a computer – need to be one or the other

What important elements do childcare need to help you access employment opportunities?

- Comfortable setting, you feel happy leaving your child
- After school/breakfast club
- Affordable
- Hours available
- Cost
- Needs to be flexible around shift work – 9am-3pm won't work
- Needs to be open in holidays especially summer holidays
- Childcare element of tax credits is part of overall sum, - makes it hard to budget – would be helpful to have help to budget for childcare

What would help?

- If I could afford transport I would have a job – in factories/prisons
- More support networks for parents and carers
- Talk to parents that are feeling the pressure of economic climate and benefit changes
- Some parents who have returned to work are feeling pressure of paying all the bills and managing finances
- Budgeting support – we need to change our budgeting to the new way of thinking
- We need more sympathetic employers

SHG Help

- Informing residents about childminders and childcare options available to them
- Informing residents of the different approaches to childcare
- Support residents with budgeting, particularly around childcare
- Transport takes a big portion of our weekly income – when transport is combined with childcare – that is most of our income
- Agree with the ideas around preparing parents with the changes to the benefits when their children reach 5 years old

# Appendix 2: SHG Staff Focus Groups

18th February 2013, 2pm

6 people present (4 women and 2 men)

## Staff assessment of childcare needs of SHG residents

- Staff experiences of residents is that where there are 2 parent households it's not uncommon for the woman to be out working.
- Larger families – older siblings providing childcare
- Consultation in Hackney highlighted that after school activities were in demand
- Breakfast clubs
- Parents increasingly putting babies into childcare because of the pressures of work
- After school and preschool support for larger Bangladeshi families with different aged children, including a young baby, husband with mental health issues – language issues/isolation.
- Childcare – part of multiple needs
- In Bangladeshi community rust is an issue
- Informal per childminding – mutual support/need ofstead registration
- Quality and Trust a big issue
- Need to look a profile of residents

## SHG Role in Supporting Childcare

- Link to community centres where:
  - There are large numbers of SHG families with under 5's
  - Little competition for existing childcare
  - There is an existing partner to work with and develop a partnership whereby they are given subsidised rent for targeting SHG residents
- Also utilise converted flats
- Build on existing childcare initiatives
  - Leyton Yard
  - Stamford Hill
  - Dalston Heights
- In areas of high concentration of young children work with the schools
- Utilise the small grants fund for childcare support e.g. after school activities
- Explore setting up informal, peer support – SHG could bring residents together, introduce to each other and set up the Time bank' Networks; a local network of volunteers who exchange skills based on a 'time credit' system- i.e. 1 hour of shopping for 1 hour of childcare.





