



# **30 Hours - Policy into Practice**

**30 hours free childcare policy  
A survey of providers by NAHT**

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### **30 Hours Free Childcare Policy: NAHT Survey of Providers**

#### **Introduction**

In September 2017 the government rolled out its 30 hour free childcare policy across England.

Since 2010, all three and four year olds have been entitled to 15 hours of free childcare a week. The introduction of the 30 hours policy meant that some children would be entitled to an additional 15 hours per week. Families are eligible for these additional hours where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and each parent earns a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or living wage, but less than £100,000 per year<sup>1</sup>.

The policy can be delivered by all those currently providing childcare and early years education, including nursery and primary schools. In order to get a better understanding of the impact of this policy on school led providers (including maintained nursery schools) NAHT carried out a survey between February and March 2018. This reached out to NAHT's school leadership members but was also open to leaders of early years provision outside NAHT membership.

Four hundred and twenty five people responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were leaders of a primary or infant school with a nursery class (73%) and a fifth (20%) led a maintained nursery school. Other respondents included child minders and those running PVI settings. Most respondents were either a head teacher or a principal (60%), or a school business leader (12%). Other roles included deputy and assistant heads and middle leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> DfE Statistics, 30 hours free childcare: autumn term 2017

## Key findings

- **Almost four fifths** of respondents (77%) said that they were delivering the 30 hours free childcare offer.
- **Less than a fifth** (19%) said that the funding they received was sufficient to cover their costs.
- **More than two-thirds** (70%) said that they were cross subsidising from another part of the school to enable them to offer the additional hours.
- **More than a quarter** (28%) said that they had not yet received their funding for the hours provided in the previous term<sup>2</sup>. Only 40% had been paid by the end of the term in which the additional hours were provided.
- **More than four-fifths** (84%) of providers reported that they or their parents had difficulties using the system to access parental codes.
- **Almost four fifths** (78%) said that 10% or fewer of the children accessing the 30 hours were entitled to the early years pupil premium.
- **Nearly all respondents** (96%) said that they offered the 30 hours during term time only and only 8% had a partnership with another provider to extend the offer for working parents.
- **More than three-quarters** (76%) indicated that they only offered the entitlement during school hours.
- **Almost nine out of ten** (87%) said that they probably would or, definitely would be looking to continue offering the additional hours next year.

## NAHT Recommendations

1. The government should revisit funding rates to ensure that the costs borne by providers are fully covered. Settings should not have to rely on cross subsidising or increasing other costs to make up for the shortfall.
2. The government should ensure that providers receive funding in a timely manner. The financial stability of providers should not be compromised by delayed payments.
3. Government should carry out a full evaluation of the impact on those children excluded from the policy if they are to avoid reversing the success of the 15 hour free early education offer.
4. The government should improve the infrastructure and IT that supports this policy so that is easier to both obtain and validate eligibility codes.

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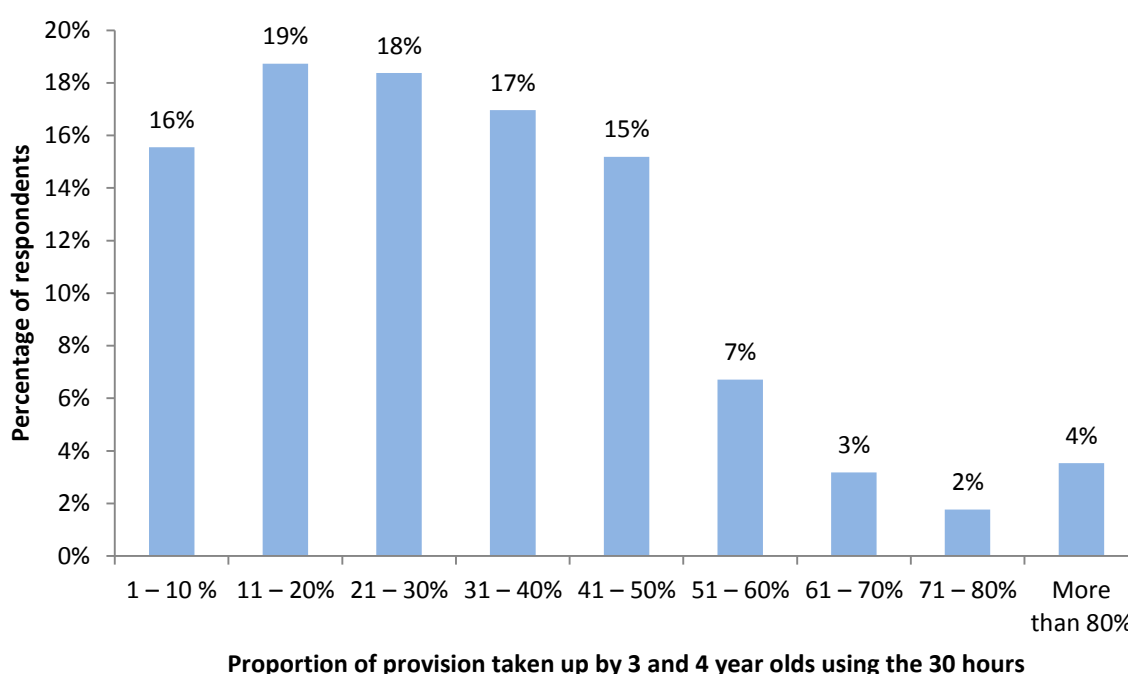
<sup>2</sup> At the time the survey was conducted

## Delivering the 30 hours

Almost four fifths of respondents (77%) to our survey said that they were delivering the 30 hours entitlement<sup>3</sup>. Of those who reported offering the additional hours, the average number of children they are providing for is 18<sup>4</sup>.

We asked respondents what proportion of their early years provision is being taken up by three and four year olds using the 30 hour entitlement. More than half (53%) said that 30% or less of their provision is taken up by those using the 30 hours entitlement. Chart 1, below, shows the responses to this question.

**Chart 1: what proportion of your early years provision is being taken up by 3 and 4 year olds using the 30 hour entitlement?<sup>5</sup>**



To gain an understanding of how providers are distributing their 30 hour offer, we asked whether the entitlement was available during term time only or all year round. The majority of respondents (96%) said that they offered the 30 hours during term time only<sup>6</sup>. The DfE had hoped that providers would work together to extend the available hours for parents, however, the majority (92%) of respondents said that they did not have a partnership with another provider to deliver the 30 hour entitlement<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> 423 responded to this question

<sup>4</sup> 281 responded to this question

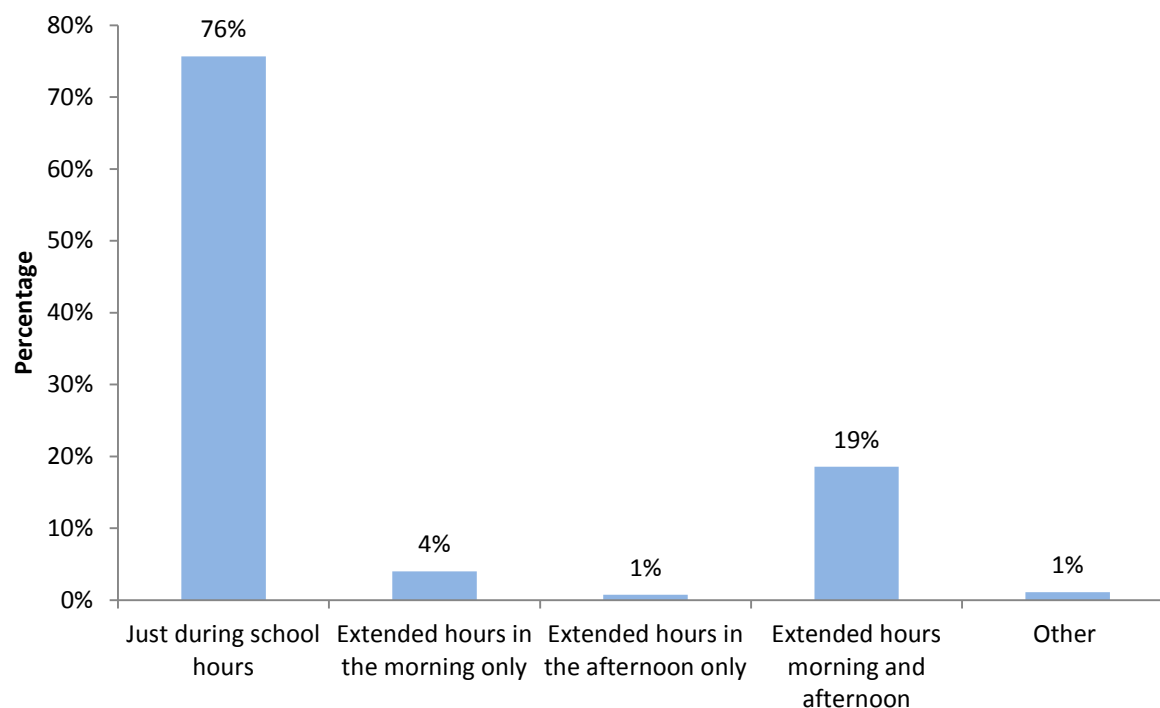
<sup>5</sup> 283 responded to this question

<sup>6</sup> 275 responded to this question

<sup>7</sup> 273 responded to this question

As shown in Chart 2, we asked if providers' extended offer was just during school hours or if it was available beyond school hours. More than three-quarters (76%) indicated that they only offered the entitlement during school hours. Almost a fifth (19%) said that they did offer some of the hours through extended morning and afternoon sessions. This limited flexibility in schools reflects the fact that for primary and nursery schools, the 30 hour offer represents a small part of their activity, and it is difficult to bear the overheads of extended hours.

**Chart 2: Is your 30 hour offer just during school hours or extended hours?<sup>8</sup>**



Almost four-fifths of respondents, (79%) view the 30 hours offer as being about both the provision of care and education combined. Only 15% view the provision as two separate entities where education and care are separated out<sup>9</sup>.

The majority of providers who responded to our survey were keen to continue providing the 30 hours from September 2018; 87% said that they probably or definitely would be looking to continue offering the additional hours

<sup>8</sup> 275 responded to this question

<sup>9</sup> 258 responded to this question

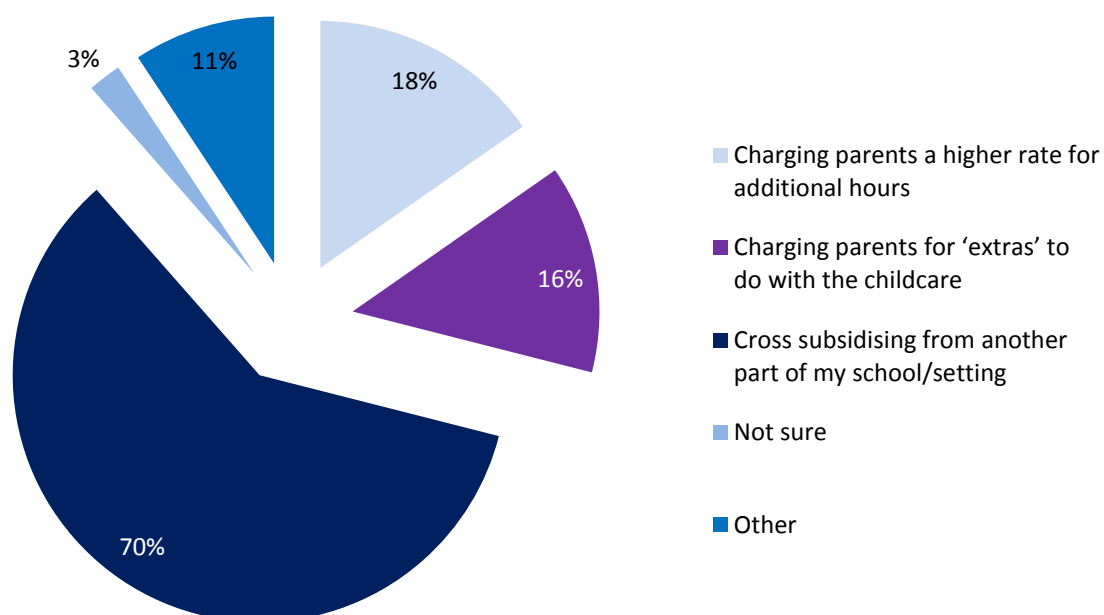
## Financial Implications

Chart 3 below shows that less than a fifth (19%) of respondents said that the funding they received was sufficient to cover their costs, whereas almost three-fifths (59%) said that the funding was insufficient<sup>10</sup>.

Concern about the financial viability of the policy also means that of those respondents who said that they were not offering the 30 hours, almost half (47%) cited insufficient funds as one of the reasons for not doing so<sup>11</sup>. This is also shown in Chart 4.

We asked how respondents were balancing budgets if the funding was insufficient to cover costs; 70% said that they were cross subsidising from another part of the school/ setting<sup>12</sup>. This demonstrates yet more financial pressure being placed on schools, already under extreme pressure as shown in our recent [Breaking Point Report](#) on the school funding crisis. Others were making up for the shortfall by either charging parents a higher rate for additional hours (18%) or charging parents for 'extras' related to childcare (16%).

**Chart 3: How are you covering your costs if the funding you receive is not sufficient?**

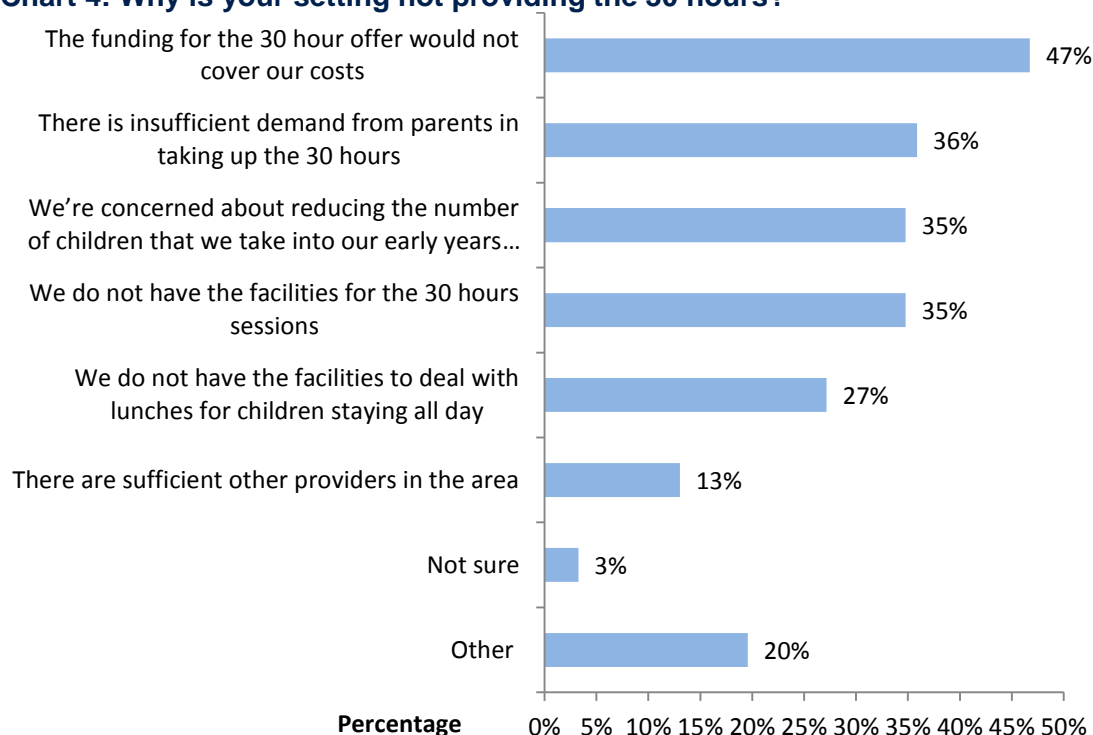


<sup>10</sup> 275 responded to this question

<sup>11</sup> 92 responded to this question. This is a lower sample number so these figures should be treated with caution.

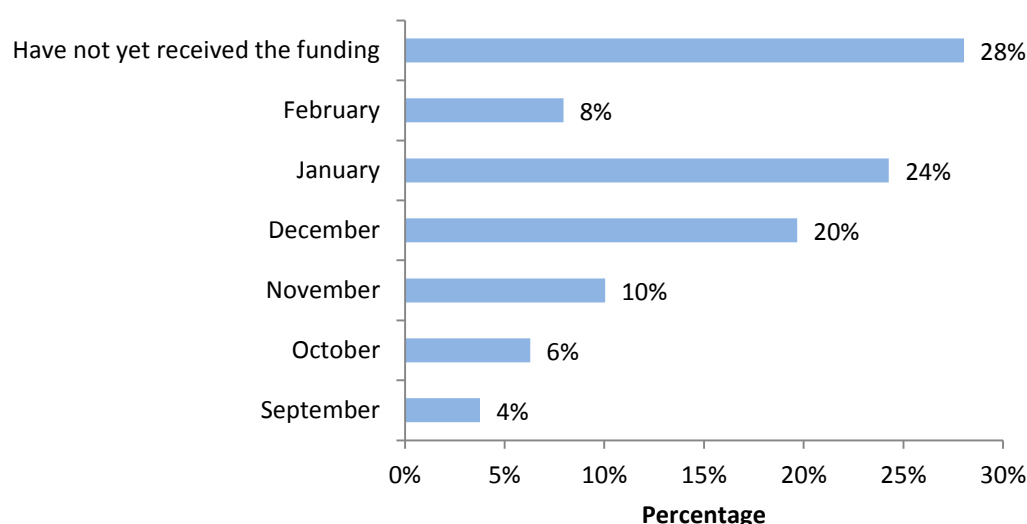
<sup>12</sup> 156 responded to this question

**Chart 4: Why is your setting not providing the 30 hours?<sup>13</sup>**



NAHT had previously heard from members that there were delays in receiving payment for providing the additional hours. As a result of this, we asked respondents when they had received payment for providing the provision in the previous term (autumn term 2017-18). As shown in Chart 5 below, more than a quarter (28%) said that they had not received their funding yet, and just under a quarter (24%) only received their funding in January. Only 40% had been paid by the end of the term for that term's provision.

**Chart 5: When were you paid for providing the provision for last term?**



<sup>13</sup> Respondents could choose more than one response

## Impact on Disadvantaged Children

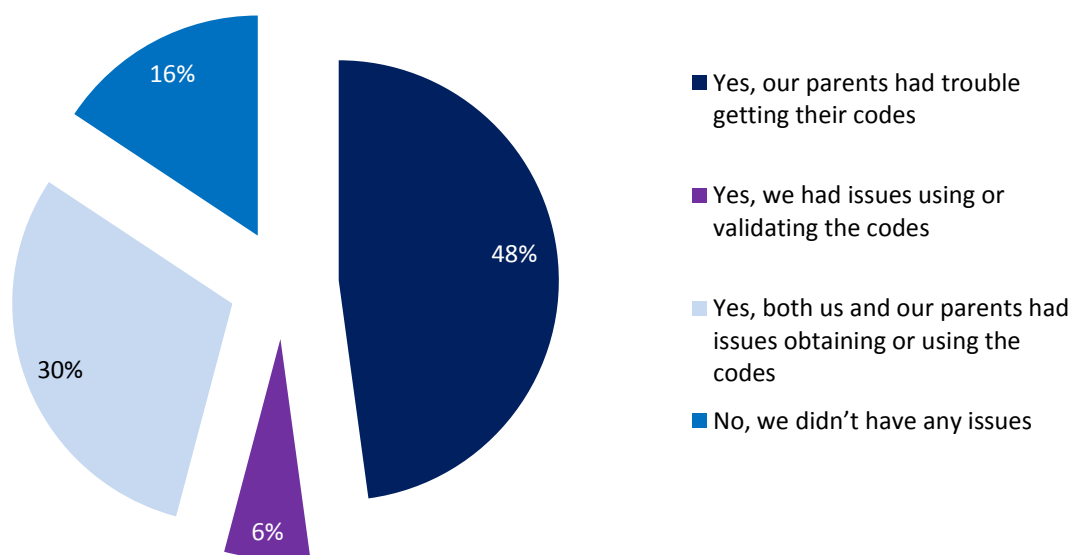
To try and better understand how the 30 hours policy is affecting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, we asked what percentage of the children accessing the 30 hours were eligible for the early years pupil premium. Almost four fifths (78%) said that 10% or fewer of their children were entitled to the early years pupil premium<sup>14</sup>. Thirty-nine percent said that no children at their setting were entitled to the pupil premium.

As a policy targeted at working families this is perhaps not surprising. However, it is of concern that almost a quarter (24%) of respondents felt that the 30 hours offer had displaced more disadvantaged three and four year olds only entitled to the 15 hour of free childcare in their setting<sup>15</sup>.

## Accessing the additional hours

We heard from members, particularly those on NAHT's Early Years and School Business Leader councils, that as institutions they had experienced problems validating eligibility codes. Our members also highlighted that parents had reported issues with getting their codes. We asked respondents to our survey to tell us if their setting or parents had experienced these issues; more than four-fifths (84%) had trouble using the system<sup>16</sup>. Chart 6, below, outlines the responses to this question.

**Chart 6: Did your parents and/or your provision have issues with accessing and using the entitlement codes from the DfE?**



<sup>14</sup> 281 responded to this question

<sup>15</sup> 259 responded to this question

<sup>16</sup> 255 responded to this question



## Conclusions

The NAHT survey on the 30 hours free childcare offer has shown that there have been issues associated with the policy.

One of the most important issues facing those providers offering the 30 hours is the reliability and adequacy of funding. The vast majority of school based providers found that the funding they received did not meet their costs and the policy also presented some level of financial risk as more than a quarter of providers had not, at the time the survey was conducted, received payment for providing the additional hours.

We heard from those in infant or primary schools that many have had to cross subsidise from other parts of the school budget to help cover the cost. We know that many schools are at breaking point and are struggling to make ends meet; this adds yet another pressure to shrinking school budgets.

NAHT had received anecdotal reports from members that there had been issues with parents and providers accessing and processing the individual codes allocated to parents. This issue was demonstrated in the results of the survey, where 84% reported trouble with using the system. These issues can not only prevent some parents from accessing their entitlement but can also cause funding problems for providers. An extra complication to this is that parents are forced to re-register every term, meaning this complicated process is repeated three times every academic year.

One of the most concerning matters raised from this survey is the potential impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The early years can have the biggest impact on a child's life and contribute to significantly narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. This survey shows that there are very few children benefitting from the policy who are eligible for the early years pupil premium; almost four fifths (78%) said that 10% or fewer of their children were entitled to the early years pupil premium. In addition, there are early signs that the policy may be having a negative impact on the availability of places for those children who are only eligible for the 15 hours.

Our survey has also shown that the 30 hours may not be delivered quite in the way that the government envisaged, at least in schools. We found that many school providers reported only offering the entitlement during term time, during school hours and not in conjunction with other providers. We must bear in mind, however, that the majority of the respondents to this survey were from primary or infant schools with a nursery class, so are more likely to tailor the offer to the school day.

The good news for the government is that despite these issues highlighted, most providers in our survey intend to continue offering the 30 hours from September 2018. In order to address the areas of concern highlighted, NAHT has set out some key recommendations in this report. We hope that the government will consider our evidence and these recommendations to ensure that the 30 hours policy can be easier to use, adequately funded and more accessible.

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