



Social Mobility &  
Child Poverty  
Commission

# Parents' experiences of services and information in the early years

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## About the Commission

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body established under the Child Poverty Act 2010 (as amended by the Welfare Reform Act 2012) with a remit to monitor the progress of the Government and others on child poverty and social mobility. It is currently made up of 7 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

The Commission board comprises:

- The Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn (Chair).
- The Rt. Hon. Baroness Gillian Shephard (Deputy Chair).
- Paul Cleal, Government and Public Sector Leader at Price Waterhouse Coopers.
- Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath.
- Douglas Hamilton, Director of the RS Macdonald Charitable Trust.
- David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation.
- Catriona Williams OBE, Chief Executive of Children in Wales.

The functions of the Commission include:

- Monitoring progress on tackling child poverty and improving social mobility, including implementation of the UK's child poverty strategy and the 2020 child poverty targets, and describing implementation of the Scottish and Welsh strategies.
- Providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility and child poverty.
- Undertaking social mobility advocacy.

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## Executive Summary

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC) commissioned Qa Research to undertake a survey of parents in order to understand the range of activities and advice used by parents from different backgrounds from pregnancy to pre-school.

Overall, 1,000 parents took part in a telephone or online survey. This research was carried out in October 2015.

The objective of the research was to gain insight into the range of activities and advice used by parents from different backgrounds from pregnancy to pre-school. All of the parents taking part in the research had a firstborn child under the age of four (so, aged 0-3) and their responses were with reference to their experiences with their first child. The survey targeted the main carer, so in most, but not all cases was the mother.

This document presents the key findings of this research under the main themes of the research.

### Ante-natal Advice & Preparation

1. Almost three-quarters of parents had undertaken some form of antenatal class or received some form of antenatal support beyond routine midwife appointments when pregnant with their first child (73%). Parents within the C2DE (working class)<sup>1</sup> social groups were significantly more likely to have not attended any kind of antenatal class compared to ABC1 parents (37% compared to 23%). A significantly higher proportion of ABC1 parents had accessed paid-for classes/support specifically, compared with other parents (22% compared to 9%). Single/lone parents were also significantly more likely to have not attended any classes compared with married/co-habiting parents (44% compared to 24%). For those that did not attend a class the main reason given by these parents was that they didn't feel that they needed to attend a class (40%). A further 27% stated that they were not offered an NHS class or they would have taken one but the timing or location was inconvenient.
2. The largest majority of parents accessed a paid-for class/support because they perceived that this would enable them to access a group of like-minded people (41%).

### Post-natal Advice & Support, the first 6 months

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<sup>1</sup> The research used a social grading scale A-E where A is upper middle class; B is middle class C1 is lower middle class; C2 is skilled working class; D is working class; E is those at the lowest levels of subsistence (including casual workers, unemployed).



3. Parents from all social backgrounds sought a wide range of advice – and from a range of sources in the first six months of parenthood. Breastfeeding and baby health and development were the most widely sought after areas of advice and information welcomed by new parents (53%). Middle class (ABC1) parents were more likely to have wanted advice/information generally, as well as a wider range of information compared to C2DE parents. The most widely used sources of information were midwives/health visitors (80%); family (78%) and friends (70%). Parents within the ABC1 group were significantly more likely to have sourced information via friends; the NHS website/information emails; parenting websites/clubs/emails and parenting books/magazines compared to C2DE parents.
4. In total, 9% of parents had paid for some kind of healthcare provision, advice or support for them/their baby within the first six months of being a parent. Middle class (ABC1) parents were also significantly more likely to have received paid-for support compared to C2DE parents (11% vs. 5%). Parents in group A were the most likely to have paid for support (15%) with this proportion then reducing with each subsequent social group down to 2% for group E.

### Activity Groups

5. A large majority of parents had taken their child to some form of activity group before their child turned one (91%). Middle class (ABC1) parents were more likely to have attended an activity group compared to C2DE parents (93% compared to 88%). It is interesting to note that middle class parents were also more likely than working class parents to be taking their children to structured activities and lessons with a focus on developing communication skills, e.g. baby signing. Working class parents were more likely to be going to activities that are cheap/free; 43% of C2DE parents spent nothing or less than five pounds a week on activities compared with 24% of those in the ABC1 social group.

### Contact with other parents

6. In a large majority of cases parents did meet up with other parents (with children around the same age) within the first year of their child's life (89%). Working class parents were significantly more likely to report having had no contact with other parents than middle class parents; with almost double the proportion reporting it (16% compared to 9%). Linked to this, is the finding that 7% of parents within social groups C2DE strongly disagreed that they had good friends they could call on compared with 4% of ABC1 parents.

## Childcare & Employment

7. A significant proportion of parents reduced their hours to part-time or became homemakers following having their first child. However, a significant minority of parents who were the main carer resumed full time work. Middle class (ABC1) parents were significantly more likely than C2DE parents to still be in full time work (34% vs. 22%).
8. More parents suggested that they would have liked to work more hours, but their perception of the cost of childcare was a deterrent. 45% of parents overall agreed with the statement "I would like to return to work/work more hours but the cost of childcare puts me off". Working class parents were considerably more likely to want to work more, with 57% of C2DE parents agreeing with the statement, compared to 40% of ABC1 parents. Levels of agreement varied most widely when looking at each socio-economic group individually (particularly amongst working class groups), with 78% of Es and 63% of Ds wanting to work more, compared to 39% for social group A. This also correlates with education level, with a higher proportion of parents educated to GCSE level agreeing with this statement compared with those with degrees (60% vs.41%).

## Information about support with childcare costs

9. Overall, 53% of parents stated that they were either very clear (14%) or had a reasonable idea, but weren't exactly clear (39%) about the support that might be available to help with childcare costs. However, the most notable finding here is the differences between social groups. A higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 said they had either a very clear or reasonable idea about possible support compared to C2DE parents (56% compared to 47%). Conversely, 18% of parents said that they had no idea at all about what support was on offer (either from Government, their employer or local authorities) – 17% of working ABC1 parents and 20% of C2DE parents. A further 29% of all parents – 28% of ABC1 parents and 33% of C2DE parents said that although they knew there was some help available, they had no idea what they were eligible for or how to get it. Over half (53%) of C2DE parents either had no idea that there was any help available at all, or they knew there was something, but had no idea of the scale, the source or the process to receive it. So, this suggests that the very parents who are most likely to want to work more hours (but are put off by the cost of childcare) are also more likely to have a poorer understanding of the support available.

## Schooling

10. The majority of parents of this group of young children had already started thinking about options for their child's school. Overall, 68% of parents had given some consideration to schooling options for their child, and 63% had specifically researched the local options. A higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 had researched local school options compared to C2DE parents (67% vs.54%).
11. Middle class (ABC1) parents were significantly more likely than working class (C2DE) parents to state that they had either actively chosen where to live or were considering moving on the basis of school catchment areas (42% vs.26%).

## Conclusions

12. Generally, it would appear that parents across all social grades have some common experiences during the early stages of parenting, particularly in terms of wanting advice and support on the issues that concern first time parents, e.g. sleeping and feeding. However, the research does reveal that parents from different socio-economic groups behave differently and have different experiences of some key aspects of early parenthood, which in turn, have implications for social mobility. The key differences appear to be around the extent to which antenatal services and enrichment activities are accessed, and the extent to which information (on financial support with childcare and schooling) is proactively sought and/or understood. Middle class parents were more likely than working class parents to have accessed antenatal classes/support in general and to have paid for that support. It is perhaps of concern that the main reason for not accessing antenatal classes/support (and this was apparent across the social grades) was parents' perception that they did not need to. Whilst this is a personal choice it may suggest that more needs to be done to demonstrate the benefits of antenatal preparation for the birth and beyond.
13. The research also suggests that middle class parents were more likely to want a wider range of advice and information in the first six months of parenting and to seek this advice and information from a broader range of sources. This information was not confined to the traditional sources (e.g. health visitors) and in fact middle class parents were more likely to be accessing information via NHS websites and other online parenting websites. Only a small proportion of parents overall paid for support in the first 6 months, but these parents were more likely to be middle class parents paying for healthcare (e.g. consultations and procedures).

14. The importance to child development of activities to stimulate and encourage a child's communication and social interaction skills in the early years is well documented. Findings from this research suggest that middle class parents are more likely to be accessing (sometimes multiple types of) enrichment opportunities in the first year of their child's life, particularly those types of activities intended to improve parent/ child communication and interaction, and structured activities which enable school readiness by exposing children to the format of instructor and focused activity. Linked to this point, this research has highlighted the fact that working class parents are more reliant on free/cheaper activities. This has implications, given the trend towards a reduction in the number of Children's Centres that have traditionally provided these types of activities.
  
15. To some extent middle class pro-activity went beyond buying in services and included an increased likelihood to develop social networks for themselves and their children - the main reason given for paying for antenatal classes and support was to gain access to a group of like-minded people. The research findings also indicate that there are some differences in the strength of social support networks amongst different groups of parents, with C2DE and BME parents being less likely to feel that they had a support network of friends who are parents that they could call on for advice and to have had regular contact with other parents in their first year as a parent.
  
16. There is a tendency for employment patterns to change following the birth of the first child and the research supports this with a higher proportion of parents (who were the main carer) returning to work on a part-time basis than resuming full time work. Middle class parents were more likely to maintain full-time employment than working class parents. There is also evidence to suggest that the issue of the prohibitive cost of childcare remains as pertinent as ever. Parents in the lower income brackets and social groups were significantly more likely to perceive the cost of childcare as a barrier to entering employment or increasing current working hours, although encouragingly findings on parental perceptions of childcare quality are encouraging. Levels of awareness on the support available with childcare costs varied, with middle class parents being more likely to have a clear idea about the support available to them. While this research did not distinguish between parents perceptions of the cost of childcare and the reality of it, it was considered that both mattered – as perceptions of the extent of support available and their eligibility for it were highly likely to drive decisions about employment.

17. While the majority of parents from all backgrounds start to think about school before their child turns 4, middle class parents are more likely to be proactively seeking information and making plans for their child's education well before their child has turned four. In particular, middle class parents were more likely to be taking proactive – and expensive – action to ensure that their child attends a good school, with many having already moved to an area or planning to change where they live to ensure that they fall in the catchment area of a good school for their first child.
  
18. To summarise, the experiences of early parenting differ according to social grade; which clearly has implications for social mobility. Middle class parents are accessing more services antenatally and in the first year of their child's life, appear to be more likely to be developing social connections for themselves and their child, and are also more informed about financial support with childcare costs and school options. This emphasises the importance of the role of government, local authorities (including health visitors) and providers of services for parents of young children in providing both clear information about what is on offer, as well as no or low cost support and activities for parents and young children from the antenatal period onwards which enable social interaction between parents. There is a particular need to ensure that information, support and activities are accessible to parents from the lowest socio-economic groups.

## Section 1 - Introduction

In September 2015 the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC) commissioned Qa Research to undertake a survey of parents in order to understand the range of activities and advice used by parents from different backgrounds from pregnancy to pre-school.

The work consisted of 500 telephone surveys completed using CATI within Qa's Contact Centre as well as 500 online surveys of parents signed up to a research panel. This research was carried out in October 2015.

This document presents the key findings of this research under the main themes of the research.

## Section 2 - Research aims

The objective of the research was to gain insight into the range of activities and advice used by parents from different backgrounds from pregnancy to pre-school. Specifically this work incorporated the following aims:

- Understand more about different groups of parents' choices and preferences with a particular emphasis on drawing out differences by socio-economic group;
- Understand the experiences and choices made by parents with their firstborns in particular;
- Understand experiences and choices made in terms of antenatal services as well as advice and support at key points in child development as well as local play/activities.

This research was set in the context of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission's role in working as an advocate for social mobility in the UK.

## Section 3 - Research design

The research was conducted to the guidelines set out by the international market research standards, ISO: 20252. A quantitative research approach was adopted. All research was carried out in October 2015.

To gather predominantly quantitative data from a significant sample of parents of pre-school aged children Qa conducted a telephone survey and an online survey.

Contacts for the telephone surveys were drawn from commercially available data purchased through a list broker. The online survey was set-up and hosted by Qa with a panel provider distributing the survey link to relevant members of their online research panel.

### Sample

In total **1,000** surveys were completed with parents whose firstborn child is aged 0-3. It is not possible to calculate a completely accurate standard error for this work as statistics are not available on the number of households in England whose eldest child is age 0-3. However, an indicative calculation has been made using the 2011 Census, e.g. the number of households in England with a youngest child aged 0-3.

Based on these figures the sample size ensures 95% confidence that the data has no more than a +/-3.1% variance for parents whose eldest child is aged 0-3.

Targets were also created for social grade with a boosted sample of those falling within the 'A' category in order to ensure that some indicative analysis could be carried out by each of the individual six social grade categories. The following was achieved:

**Table 1 Breakdown of sample by social group**

Social grade	Respondents (%)	English population (%)
A	12%	4%
B	34%	23%
C1	24%	27%
C2	16%	22%
D	9%	16%
E	5%	9%

Source: Qa Research & NRS 2014 (N = 1,000)

We also monitored completions by region to ensure there was representation from each of the nine regions in England. Between 57-144 surveys were completed in each region. Further detail on the sample profile is available in Appendix 1.

### Analysis:

The telephone and online survey data was analysed using Askia Analyse. Data was cross-tabulated by key information to assess differences in experiences and choices by different variables. Analysis by social grade groupings ABC1 and C2DE has been carried out along with analysis by single social grade group.<sup>2</sup>

Please note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, with any 0.5% figures rounded up. As a result some figures may add up to more than 100%. We have reported throughout where any significant statistical differences appear from our analysis of the data by various cross-tabulations.

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<sup>2</sup> The social group of a family is based on the work of the main income earner. A: higher managerial administrative or professional; B: intermediate higher managerial administrative or professional; C1: supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional; C2: skilled manual workers; D: semi and unskilled manual workers; E: State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only. Social groups A, B and C1 are generally seen as middle class, C2 and D as working class, and E are those at the lowest levels of subsistence (including the unemployed and those unable to work).

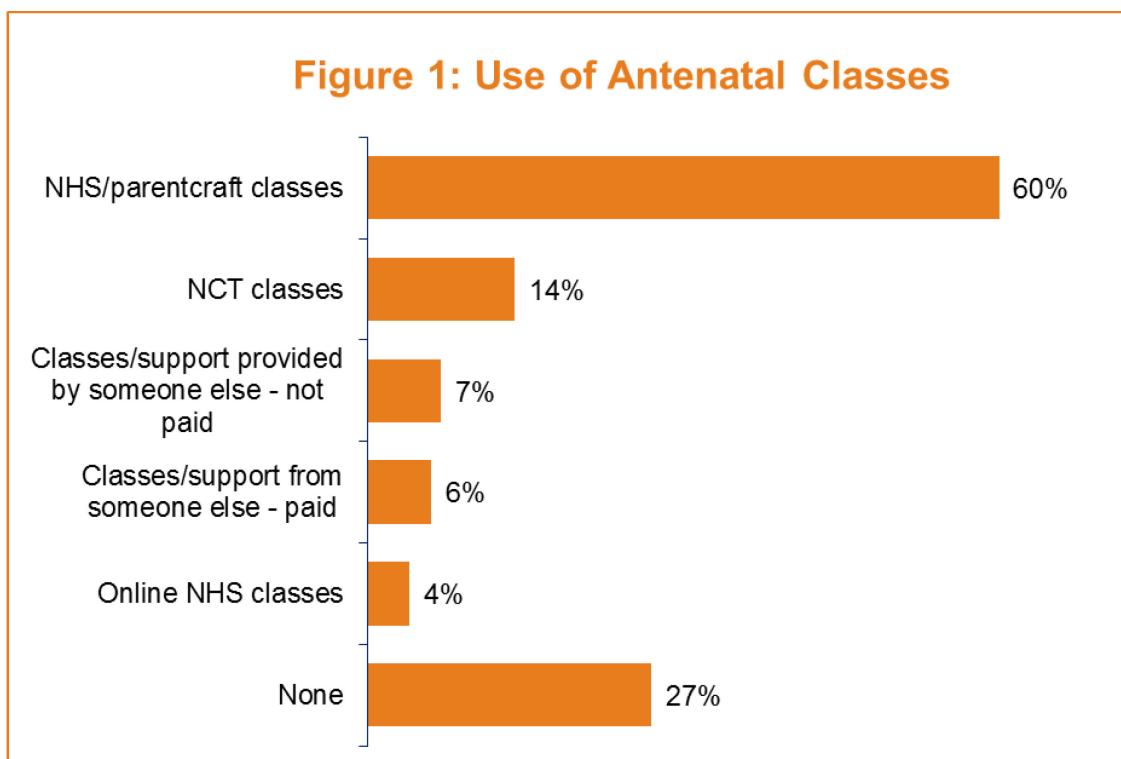


## Section 4 - Findings

### 4.1 Ante-natal Advice & Preparation

Almost three-quarters of parents had undertaken some form of antenatal class or received some form of antenatal support other than routine midwife appointments when pregnant with their first child (73%). Six in ten parents had accessed free classes/support (63%) whilst 18% had paid for classes or support; 14% specifically mentioned having attended classes run by the National Childbirth Trust (NCT).

Figure 1: Use of antenatal classes



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000. Multiple Response question)

Parents that had attended classes or antenatal support other than standard NHS/NCT classes were asked to give further details about this. The most frequently cited responses included:

Non-Paid Support:

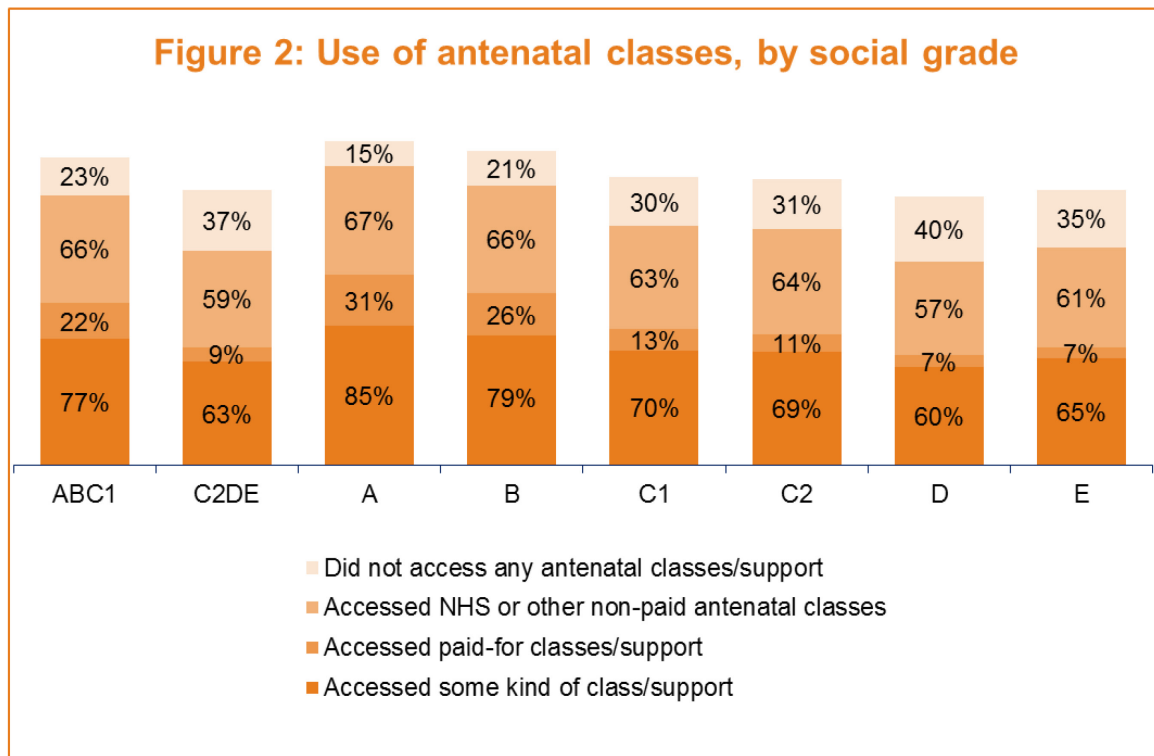
- Children's Centre classes;
- Breastfeeding support/clinics;
- Support from family/friends.

Paid Support:

- Hypnobirthing classes/support;
- Antenatal yoga;
- Other private antenatal classes/courses (i.e. not provided by NCT).

Analysis by social grade reveals some clear patterns; results by social grade are shown below:

**Figure 2: Use of antenatal classes, by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000. Multiple Response)

As illustrated above, parents within the C2DE social groups were significantly more likely to have not attended any kind of antenatal class compared to ABC1 parents (37% compared to 23%). A significantly higher proportion of ABC1 parents had accessed paid-for classes/support specifically, compared with other parents (22% compared to 9%). As an example 17% of ABC1 parents had attended NCT classes compared to 6% of C2DE parents. Data also suggests that many ABC1 parents had attended both NHS classes as well as accessing paid-for classes.

When examining differences by individual social group there is also a clear pattern of access. Parents in social group A were significantly more likely to have attended some form of class (85%), and accessed some form of paid-for support (31%) with the proportions falling for each social group. Those in social group D were most likely to have not accessed any kind of class (40%), those in groups D and E were both least likely to access paid-for classes (both 7%).

There are also similar correlations of access according to the highest qualification level of parent. Parents with higher qualification levels and higher household incomes were

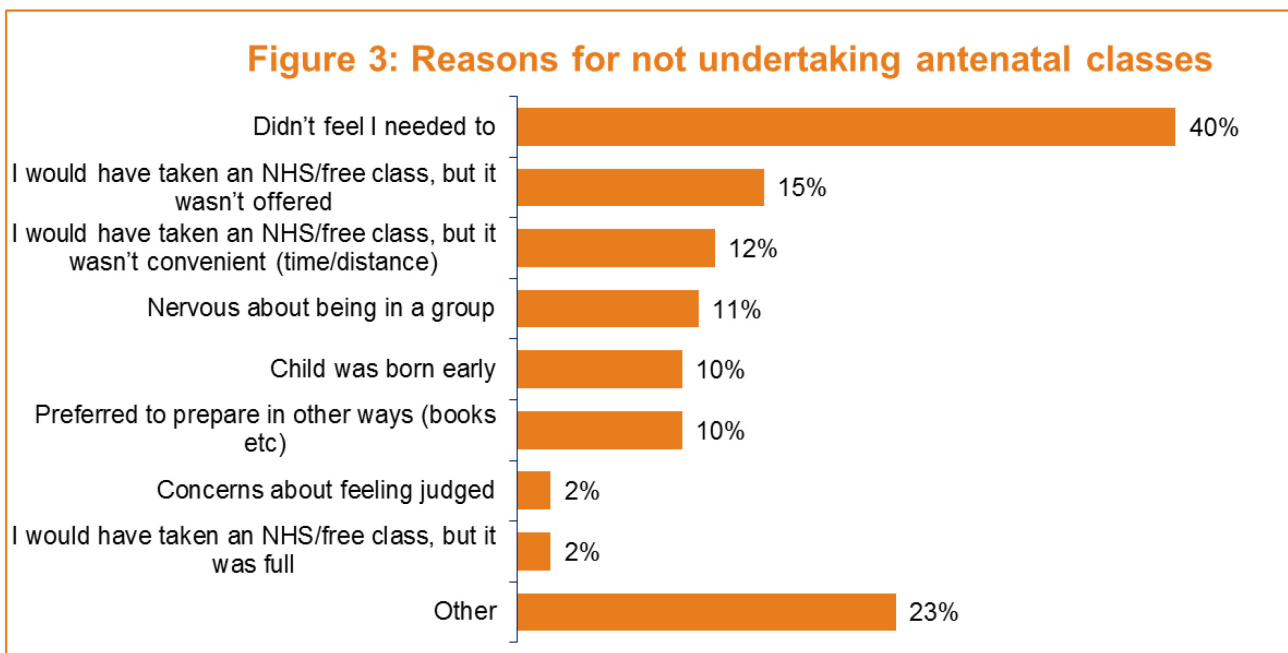
significantly more likely to have accessed ante-natal classes/support in general and to have also accessed paid-for classes/support. For example, 46% of parents educated to GCSE level had not accessed any antenatal classes compared with only 18% of those with a degree. This pattern is also present for household income. For example, 46% of those with a household income of less than £20k a year had not accessed any kind of class compared with just 12% of those with an income of £60k or above.

Analysis by other variables reveals some further interesting findings:

- Single/lone parents were significantly more likely to have not attended any classes compared with married/co-habiting parents (44% compared to 24%).
- Parents in their twenties were also significantly more likely to have not attended any classes compared to first time parents in their thirties or forties (39% compared to 22% and 26% respectively).
- Single/lone parents and those in their twenties were also significantly less likely to have accessed paid-for classes/support.

Respondents that hadn't accessed any antenatal classes were asked why this was the case.

**Figure 3: Reasons for not undertaking antenatal classes**



Source: Qa Research (N = 271. Multiple Response question)

As shown, the largest majority of these parents stated that they didn't feel that they needed to attend a class (40%). A further 27% stated that they were not offered an NHS class or they would have taken one but the timing or location was inconvenient.

Over a fifth of these parents mentioned 'other' reasons for not undertaking an antenatal class (23%). Reasons included:

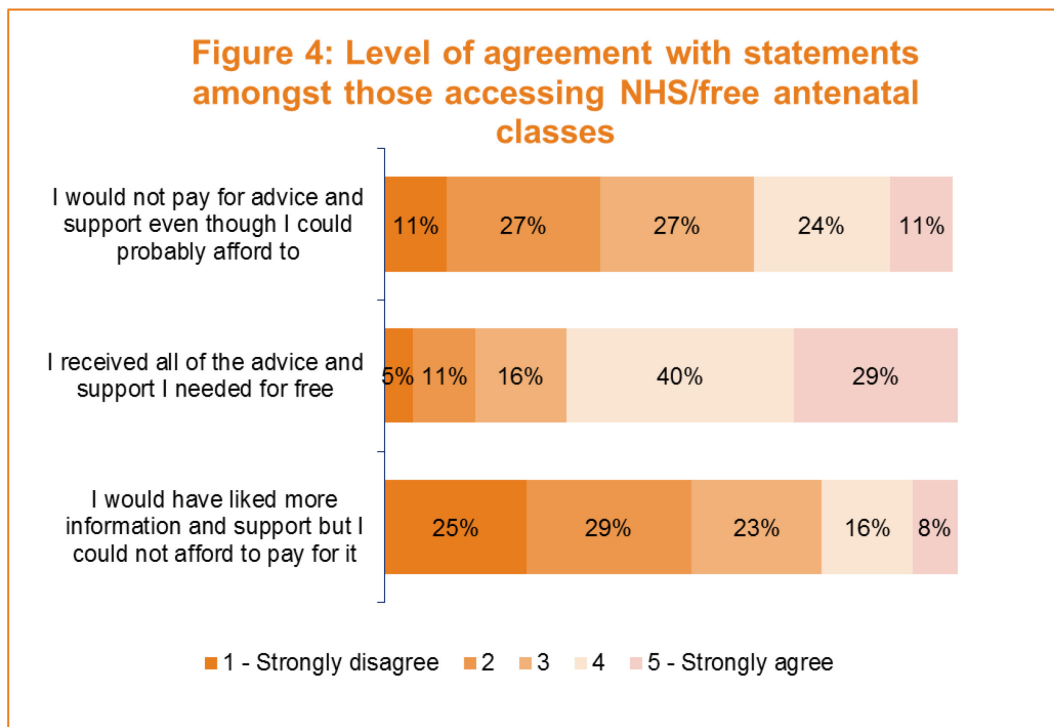
- They had adopted a child;
- Due to work commitments/lack of free time;

- Didn't want to think about birth;
- Worked in a relevant field;
- Planned C-section;
- Didn't know they were pregnant until late on;
- Support wasn't specific enough (e.g. giving birth to twins).

There were no noteworthy differences in results for this question according to demographics.

In order to try and establish whether the ability to pay for antenatal support prevented people from receiving the support they required parents were asked whether they agreed with certain statements surrounding this. Results are shown on the next page. Please note these results are based on parents that had only accessed free antenatal care/support.

**Figure 4: Level of agreement with statements**



Source: Qa Research (N = 547)

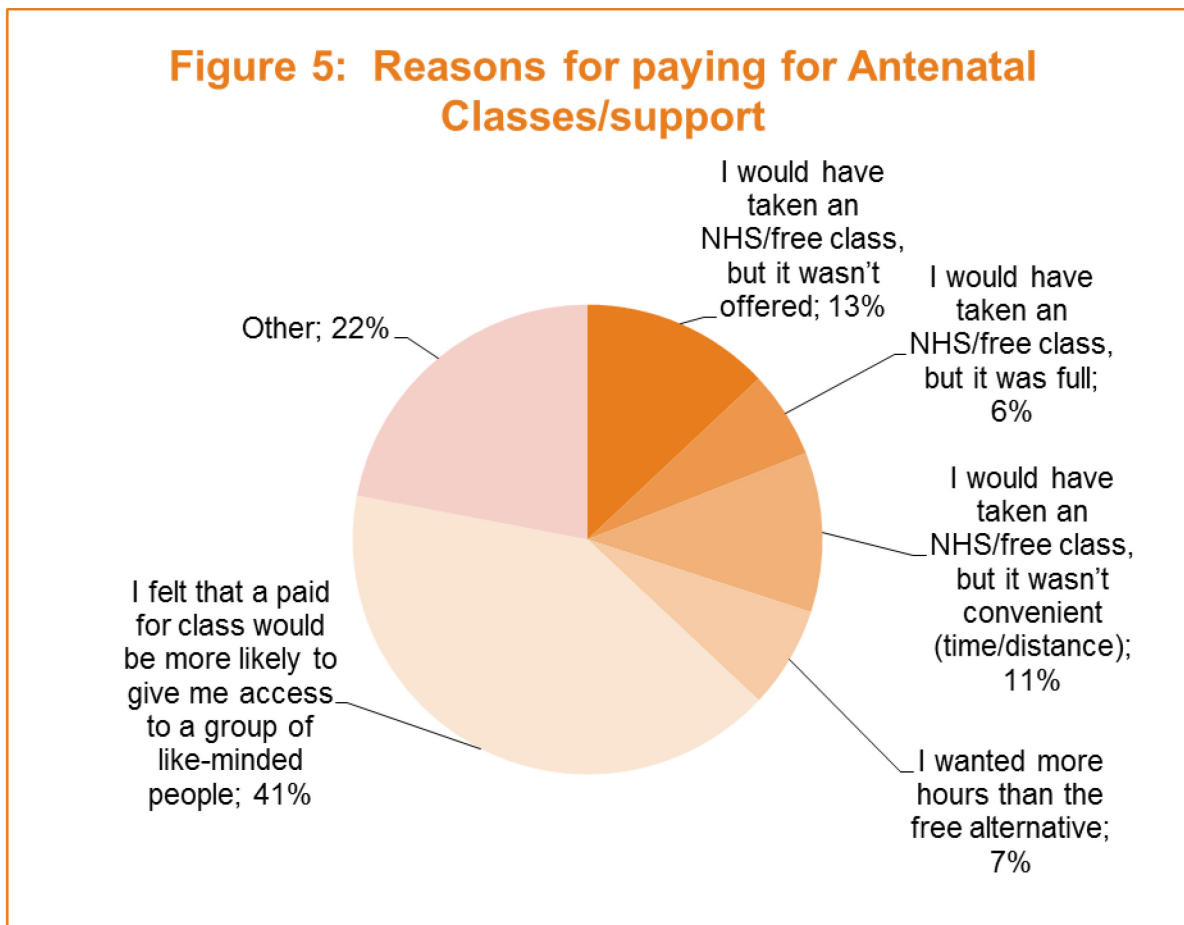
Positively, a majority of parents who had only accessed free antenatal care and support agreed that they had received all of the advice and support that they needed (69%). There were no significant differences in this response by social grade.

Just less than a quarter of these parents (24%) agreed that they would have liked more information and support but could not afford to pay for it. These parents spanned all income brackets although those in the lowest income category (less than £20k a year household income) were most likely to agree with this. ABC1 parents were significantly more likely to strongly disagree with this statement compared to C2DE parents (27% compared to 20%).

A further 35% agreed that they wouldn't pay for advice even though they could probably afford to. Again there were no significant differences in results by social grade or income.

Those that had accessed some kind of paid-for class or support were asked to give their main reason for this, overall results are shown on the next page.

Figure 5: Reasons for accessing paid-for antenatal care



Source: Qa Research (N = 182)

The largest majority of parents who accessed a paid-for class/support said that they did so because they perceived that this would enable them to access a group of like-minded people (41%). Smaller proportions of parents mentioned issues with the NHS alternative, such as lack of availability, convenience or not having being told about it.

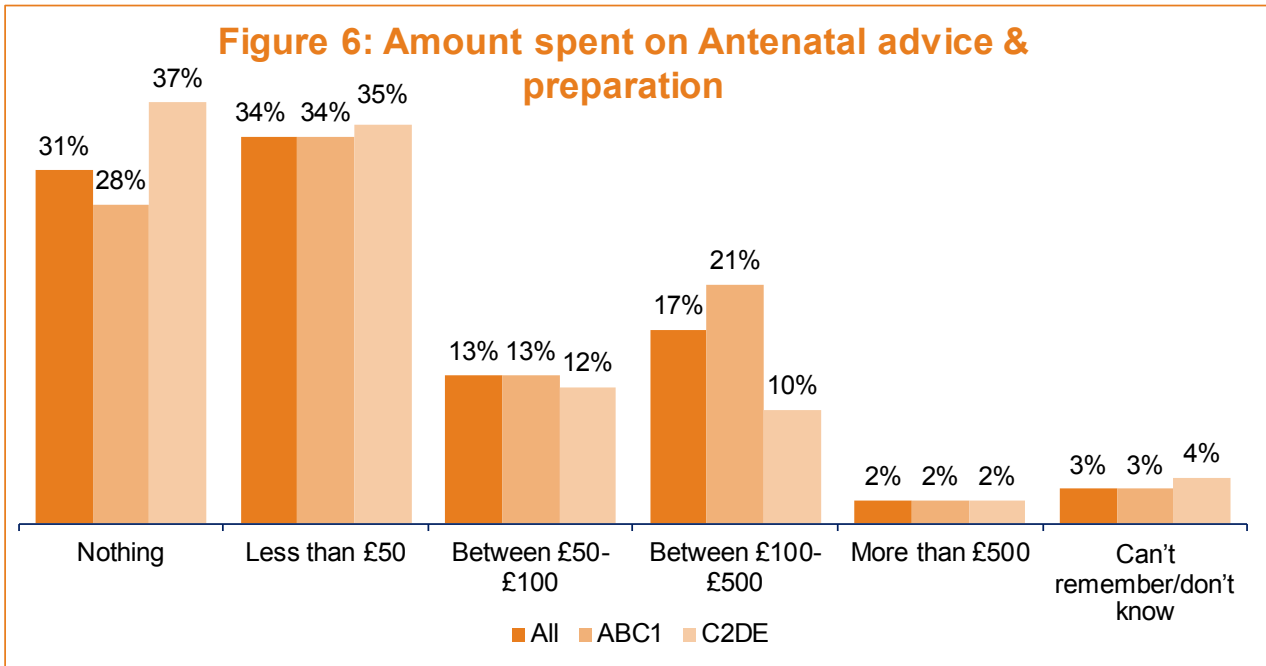
A fifth of parents accessing paid for classes gave 'other' reasons for paying for this provision (21%). The most frequently cited responses included:

- They attended paid-for as well as non-paid for classes/support;
- Wanted to learn more than the NHS classes offered/seeking specific information e.g. focus on natural birthing techniques;
- Recommended to them by others.

## Amount spent on antenatal advice & preparation

Respondents were asked to estimate how much they spent on advice and preparation for parenting/labour before their baby was born. Parents were asked to include the cost of any classes as well as things like books and other labour/parenting preparation but not baby items.

**Figure 6: Amount spent on advice/preparation for parenting/labour**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1, 000)

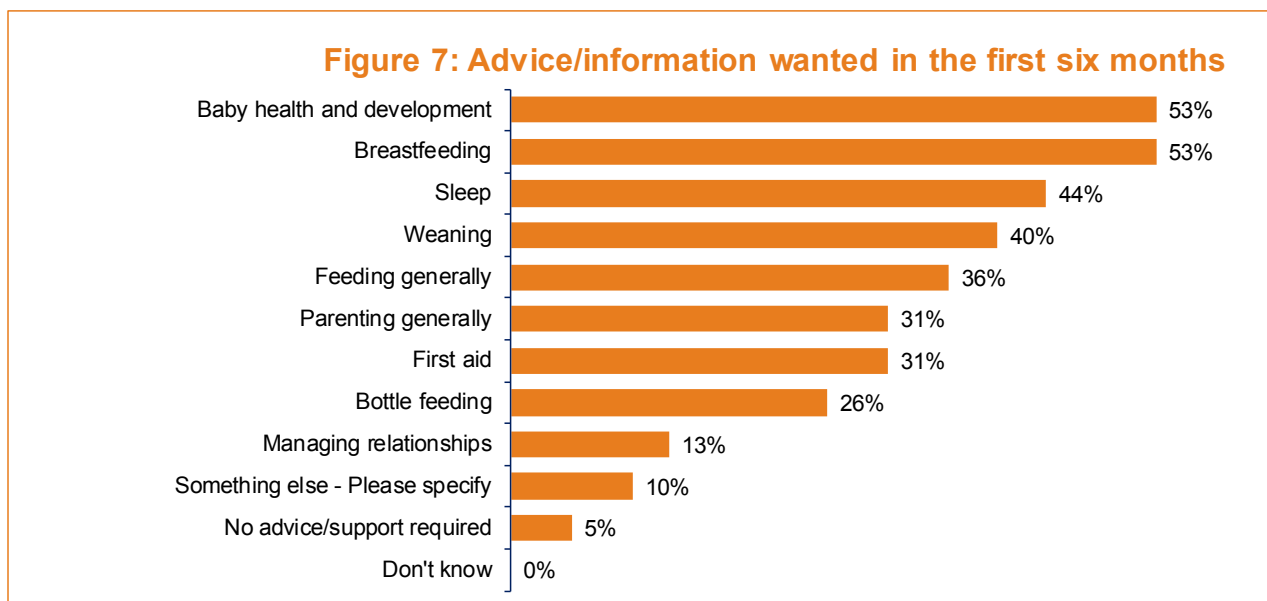
Overall, the majority (69%) of parents from across all of the social grades spent some money on antenatal preparation. However, middle class parents were more likely to spend more. Middle class (ABC1) parents were significantly more likely to report having spent between £100-£500 on preparation/advice for parenting/labour than C2DE parents. As illustrated above, three in ten parents had not spent anything (31%), with those in social groups C2DE significantly more likely to say this was the case than ABC1 parents (37% compared to 27%).

## 4.2 Post-natal Advice & Support, the first 6 months

### Type of advice required

Respondents were asked what the main issues were which they wanted advice/information on during their first six months as a parent. Results are shown below.

**Figure 7: Area of advice/information wanted in the first six months**



Source: Qa Research (N=1,000, Multiple Response)

Breastfeeding and baby health and development were the most widely sought after areas of advice and information welcomed by new parents (53%). Four in ten parents wanted advice/information on sleep (44%) and weaning (40%) whilst three in ten wanted advice on feeding generally (36%).

As shown, one in ten (10%) of respondents wanted information on something else. Responses included:

- Maternal health post-birth;
- Post-natal depression;
- Activity groups/ways to meet other parents.

Further analysis suggests that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) parents were significantly more likely to have wanted advice/information on breastfeeding; parenting generally and managing relationships compared to White parents (62%; 39%; 20% compared to 52%; 29% and 11% respectively).

Data suggests some differences in results according to the socio-economic background of the parent. ABC1 parents were more likely to have wanted advice/information generally, as well as a wider range of information compared to C2DE parents. In total 7% of C2DE parents said that they did not require any advice or information, a higher proportion than ABC1 parents (4%). Conversely, this tells us that 93% of C2DEs and 96% of ABC1s did want advice and information to support their parenting. Middle class



parents were also more likely to want advice on breastfeeding and sleep than working class parents, with 46% of C2DE parents wanting advice on breastfeeding compared with 56% of ABC1 parents and 37% of C2DE parents wanting advice on sleep compared with 47% of ABC1 parents. The table below presents the results by social grade.

**Table 2 Advice & Support wanted, by social grade**

	ABC1	C2DE	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
Sleep	47%	37%	50%	47%	43%	41%	31%	22%
Breastfeeding	56%	46%	48%	61%	55%	50%	43%	46%
Bottle feeding	27%	23%	25%	28%	29%	26%	20%	13%
Feeding generally	39%	31%	43%	40%	36%	34%	34%	26%
Weaning	41%	39%	37%	45%	39%	44%	46%	28%
Baby health and development	55%	50%	53%	59%	52%	54%	40%	54%
First aid	33%	27%	32%	35%	32%	28%	29%	30%
Parenting generally	31%	30%	25%	30%	33%	34%	33%	22%
Managing relationships	13%	11%	15%	11%	15%	12%	7%	13%
Something else	11%	6%	12%	12%	11%	7%	4%	11%
No advice/support required	4%	7%	5%	4%	2%	5%	5%	7%
Don't know	0%	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

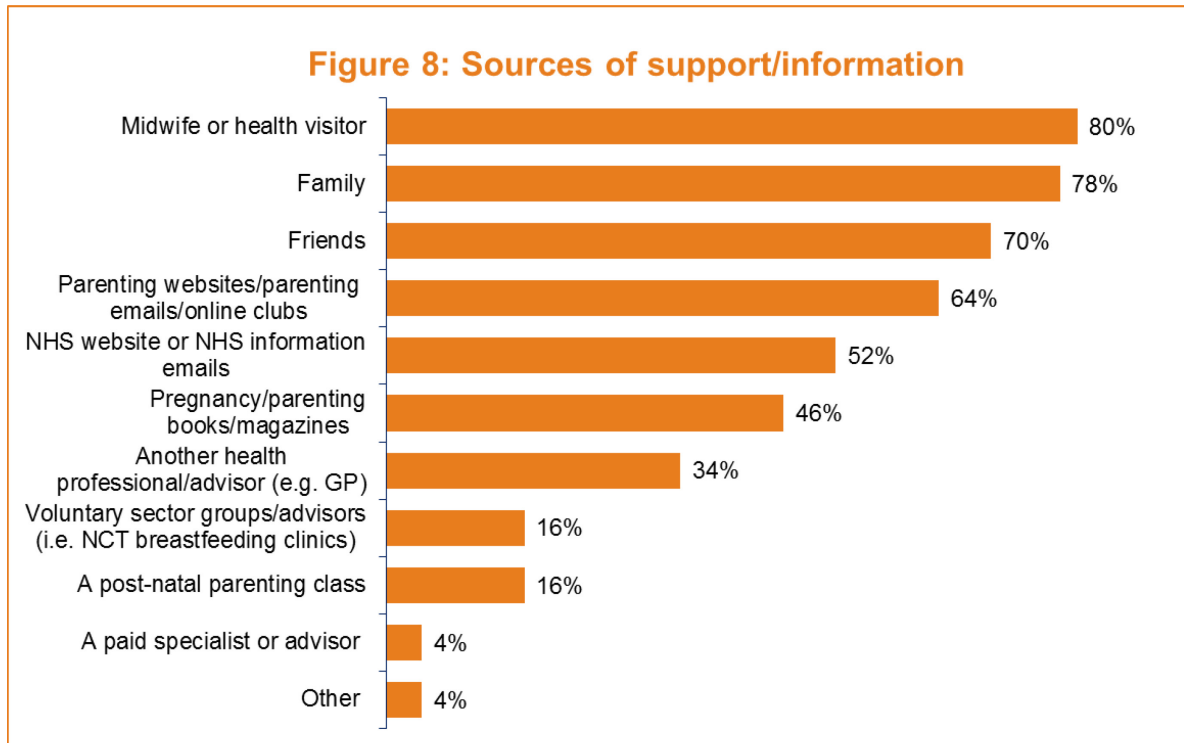
Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

A similar pattern is identifiable by level of education, with the higher qualified parents wanting advice and a wider range of advice compared to those with no or lower level qualifications. The same pattern is evident by household income.

## Sources of information

The following chart shows the different sources of support and information parents had used to find out more about these topics.

**Figure 8: Sources of support/information used**



Source: Qa Research (N = 949. Multiple Response question)

On average parents referred to use of five different sources of support or information. As shown the most widely used sources of information are midwives/health visitors (80%); family (78%) and friends (70%). Over six in ten parents also accessed information via parenting websites/online parenting clubs or through parenting emails (64%). Around half of parents had found information through the NHS website or through NHS information emails (52%).

Data also reveals that White parents are more likely to have sought advice and information from family and friends compared to BME parents (80% and 72% compared to 69% and 60% respectively).

Results by social grade are shown below.

**Table 3 Sources of advice and information**

	ABC1	C2DE	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
A post-natal parenting class	17%	14%	23%	18%	12%	16%	15%	10%
Midwife or health visitor	79%	83%	75%	81%	79%	83%	81%	90%
Another health professional/advisor (e.g. GP)	35%	33%	28%	38%	35%	33%	35%	36%
Voluntary sector groups/advisors (i.e. NCT breastfeeding clinics)	16%	16%	18%	17%	14%	19%	13%	14%
A paid specialist or advisor (e.g. maternity nurse, sleep specialist, breastfeeding consultant, dietician)	5%	3%	5%	6%	3%	3%	4%	2%
Family	79%	75%	73%	84%	82%	74%	75%	79%
Friends	72%	64%	73%	75%	71%	69%	59%	76%
NHS website or NHS information emails	57%	40%	50%	60%	60%	43%	42%	45%
Parenting websites/parenting emails/online clubs (e.g. Mumsnet/NetMums/Babycentre etc)	69%	53%	69%	72%	69%	56%	51%	62%
Pregnancy/parenting books/magazines	49%	41%	51%	53%	45%	47%	34%	45%
Other	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	6%	4%	10%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

Parents within the ABC1 group were significantly more likely to have sourced information via friends; the NHS website/information emails; parenting websites/clubs/emails and parenting books/magazines compared to C2DE parents.

Of the 38 parents who had used a paid specialist or adviser, 89% were married/cohabiting; 71% were in their thirties and 95% described their ethnic background as White. Almost six in ten of these parents had a degree level qualification or above (58%); 79% were ABC1 parents.

Parents were asked to state which three sources of support had been the most important to them. Once again the most widely cited responses were midwives/health visitors (65%); family (65%) and friends (44%). Of the 38 parents who accessed a paid specialist or advisor 22 of them ranked this support as being one of their most important forms of support (59%).

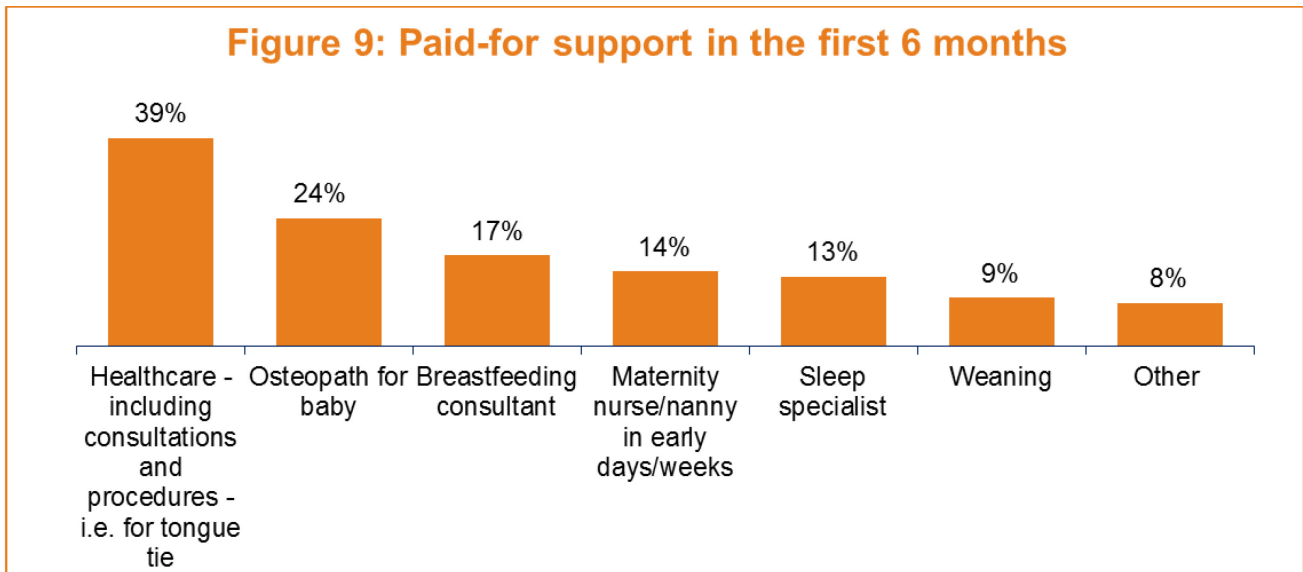
### Paid for support

In total 9% of parents had paid for some kind of healthcare provision, advice or support for them/their baby within the first six months of being a parent, or had it paid for by someone else on their behalf.

Middle class (ABC1) parents were significantly more likely to have received paid-for support compared to C2DE parents (11% vs. 5%). Parents in group A were the most likely to have paid for support (15%) with this proportion then reducing with each subsequent social group down to 2% for group E.

The chart below shows what kind of paid-for support these 87 parents had used within the first six months of their child's life.

**Figure 9: Sources of support/information used**



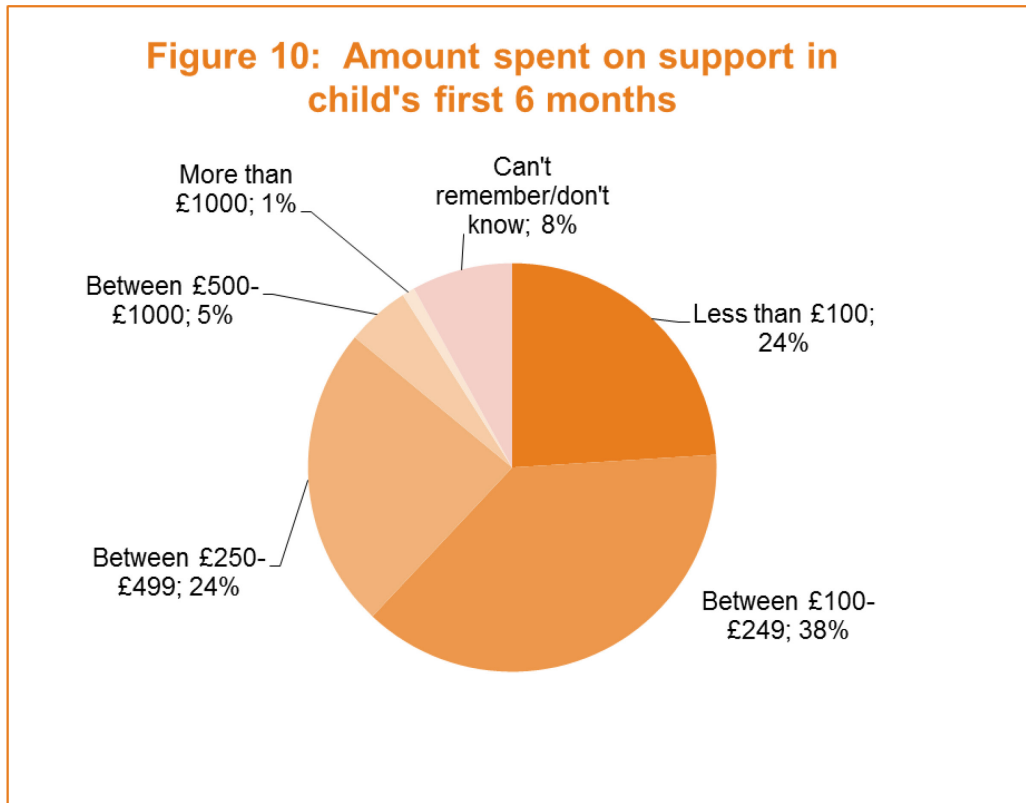
Source: Qa Research (N = 87. Multiple Response question)

As shown, the largest majority of these parents had paid for healthcare (39%) whilst a quarter had used an osteopath for their baby (24%). 'Other' support included first aid classes; chiropractors and private counselling for post-natal depression.

### Amount spent on support in a child's first 6 months

Respondents were asked how much they spent overall on support/services during their first six months as a parent. The largest proportion of parents had spent £100-£249 on this additional support (38%).

**Figure 10: Amount spent on support in child's first 6 months**



Source: Qa Research (N = 87)

A majority of C2DE parents that had accessed paid-for support spent less than £249 on this (73%) compared with 60% of ABC1 parents.

### 4.3 Activity Groups

As part of the survey parents were asked a range of questions about different activities and services they may have attended or used with their firstborn child in the year before they turned one.

#### Activities attended in a child's first year

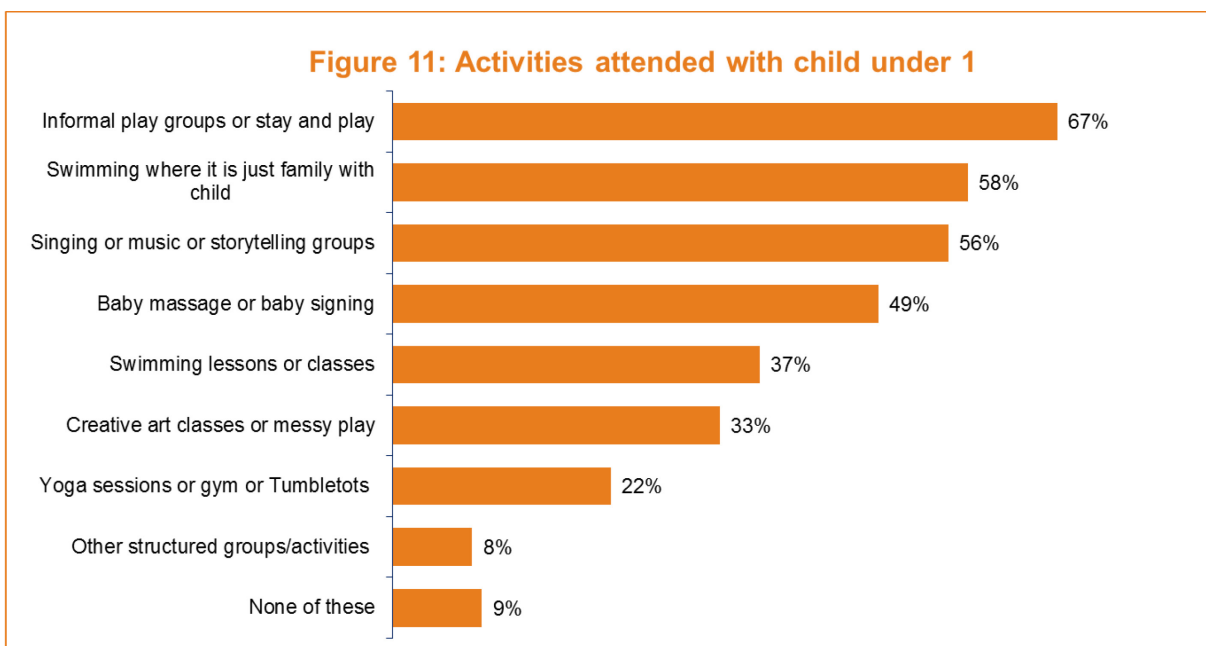
A large majority of parents had taken their child to some form of activity group before their child turned one (91%). This figure is greater for White parents (94%) compared to BME parents (83%). Asian parents in particular were less likely to have attended an activity group compared to other ethnic groups (75% compared to 88% of Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups; 89% of Black parents and 93% of White parents).

There are also differences according to socio-economic background. It is interesting to note that ABC1 parents were more likely to have attended an activity group compared to C2DE parents (93% compared to 88%). Those in social group D were least likely to have attended an activity (86%). This correlates with C2DE parents being less likely to have had contact with other parents in the first year of their child's life.

Similar patterns are also apparent in terms of the qualification levels of parents with those with no or the lowest level qualifications less likely to report having attended an activity group with their child.

The range of groups accessed is shown below:

**Figure 11: Activities attended in child's first year**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000. Multiple Response question)

On average parents had taken part in three different types of activity groups with their child before they turned one. This mean was highest for parents in social group A (3.74)

and lowest for those in social group D (2.59). These average figures also generally increased the higher qualified a parent was and the higher the household income. ABC1 parents were significantly more likely to have attended certain types of activities than C2DE parents. These included the following:

- Baby massage or baby signing (54% compared to 40%)
- Yoga sessions or gym or tumble tots (25% compared to 15%)
- Swimming lessons or classes (43% compared to 24%)
- Singing/music/storytelling groups (60% compared to 50%)

There were no significant differences in swimming generally; use of creative classes/messy play and informal play groups by these two social grade categories.

The next table shows that in a majority of cases activities had been accessed on a regular basis, with a majority mentioning weekly attendance or attending for a set number of weeks.

**Table 4 Frequency of accessing activity groups**

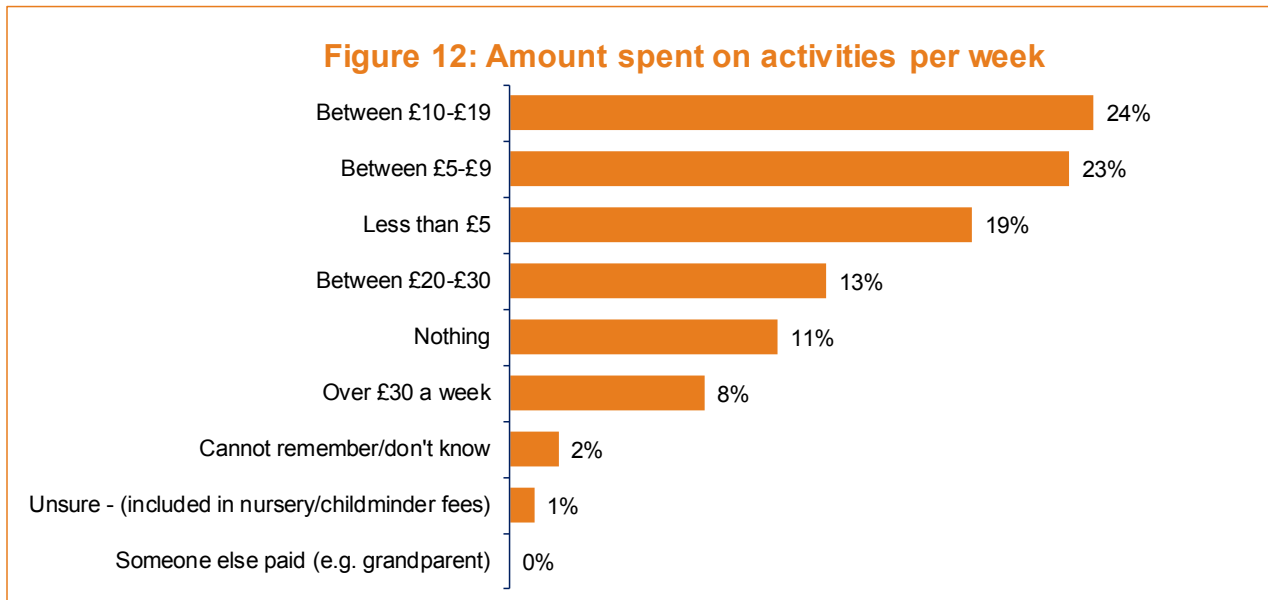
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Once or twice a month</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>A few times in the year</b>	<b>For a set number of weeks (courses)</b>	<b>One off occasion</b>
Baby massage or baby signing	45%	6%	4%	3%	37%	5%
Yoga sessions or gym or Tumbletots	57%	13%	5%	4%	16%	4%
Swimming lessons or classes	67%	9%	4%	2%	17%	1%
Swimming where it is just family with child	28%	30%	18%	20%	1%	3%
Singing or music or storytelling groups	71%	13%	5%	7%	4%	1%
Creative art classes or messy play	53%	17%	14%	9%	4%	3%
Informal play groups or stay and play	65%	19%	9%	4%	2%	1%
Other structured groups/activities	83%	6%	5%	1%	4%	0%

Source: Qa Research (N = various for each type of activity)

## Amount spent on activities in a child's first year

Parents had spent a varying amount on these activities as shown in the next chart.

**Figure 12: Amount spent per week on activities**



Source: Qa Research (N = 914)

There are clear differences in the amount spent on activities by social group. In total, 47% of parents had spent between £5 and £19 on activities each week. Almost two-thirds of C2DE parents (65%) had spent up to £9 a week on activities (including free activities) compared to 47% of ABC1 parents. Half of ABC1 parents spent £10 or more each week on activities compared to 32% of C2DE parents.

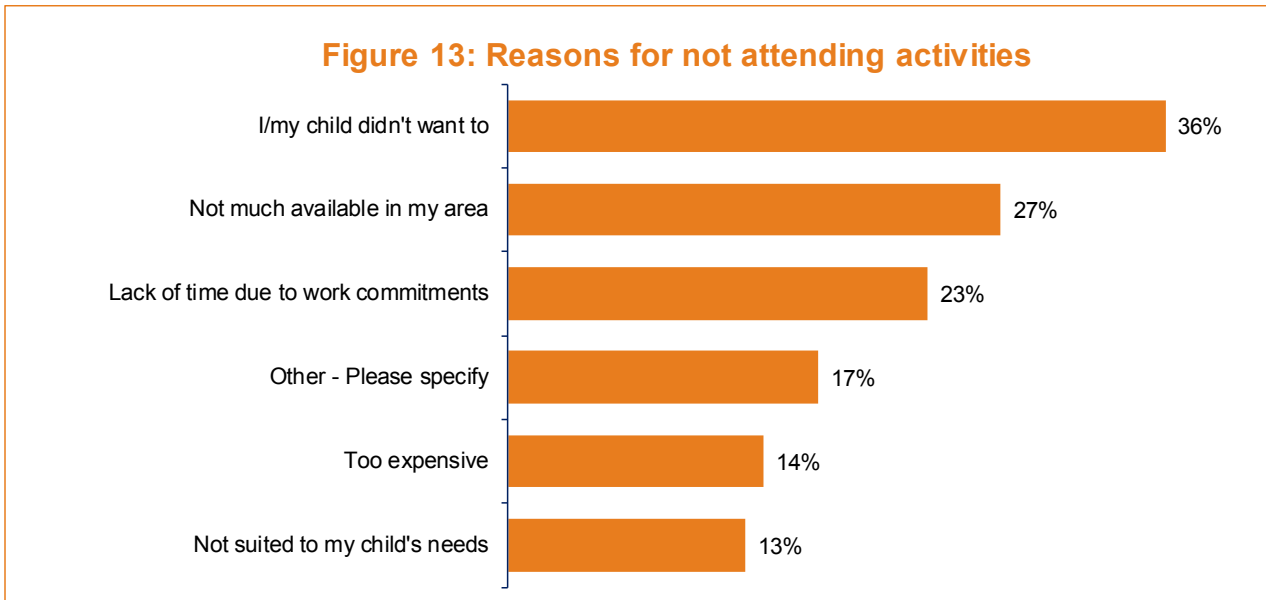
In terms of income levels there are also clear differences in expenditure on activities, with higher income parents spending more on activities. As an example 20% of parents with an annual household income of less than £20k did not pay for the activities they took part in compared to 4% of those with an income of £60k or above.



## Reasons for not attending activities

Parents who had not attended any activities in the first year were asked if there were any specific reasons for this.

**Figure 13: Reasons for not attending activities**



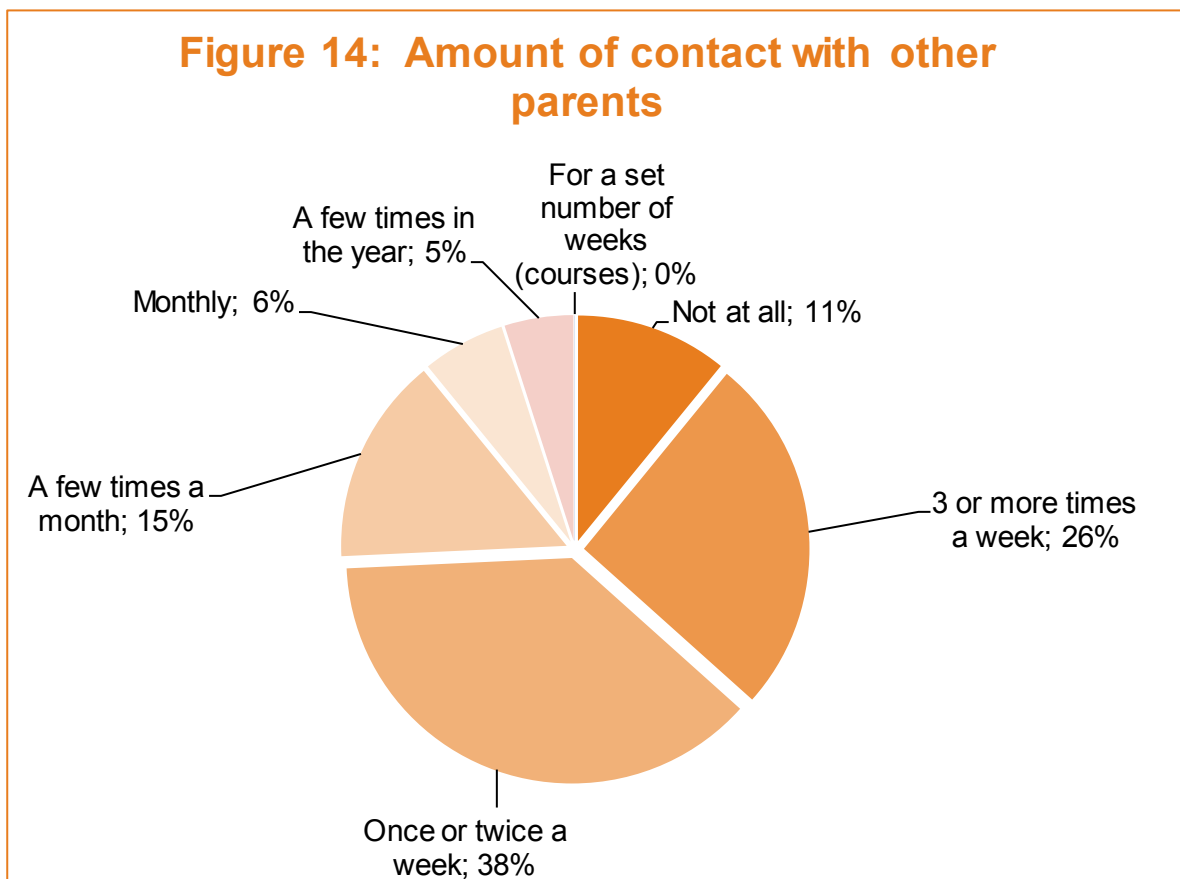
Source: Qa Research (N=86, Multiple response question)

As illustrated above, the main reason given by parents for not attending activities related to their/their child's preference (36%). A lack of availability of activities was mentioned by 27% of respondents, along with a lack of time due to work commitments (23%). There were no significant differences by socio-economic group.

## Contact with other parents

To get a further sense of informal networks of support parents were asked how often they met up with other parents with a child the same age to their own, within their child's first year. Results are shown on the next page.

Figure 14: Amount of contact with other parents



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

In a large majority of cases parents did meet up with other parents (with children around the same age) within the first year of their child's life (89%).

White parents were significantly more likely to have more frequent contact with other parents during the first year compared to BME parents – 27% of White parents met up with other parents two to three times a week compared with 19% of BME parents.

In terms of social grade C2DE parents were significantly more likely to report not having any contact with other parents compared to ABC1 parents (16% compared to 9%). Those in group D were least likely to have contact with other parents (20%). Similar patterns are also apparent in terms of the qualification levels of parents and household income with those with no or the lowest level qualifications and those with the lowest income levels reporting less frequent contact with other parents.

Following on from this, respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with two statements about social contact with other parents:

- “I feel like I have a good group of friends who are parents that I could call on for advice whenever I need them.”
- “I have felt more isolated and lonely since I have become a parent.”

**Figure 15: Levels of agreement with statement**



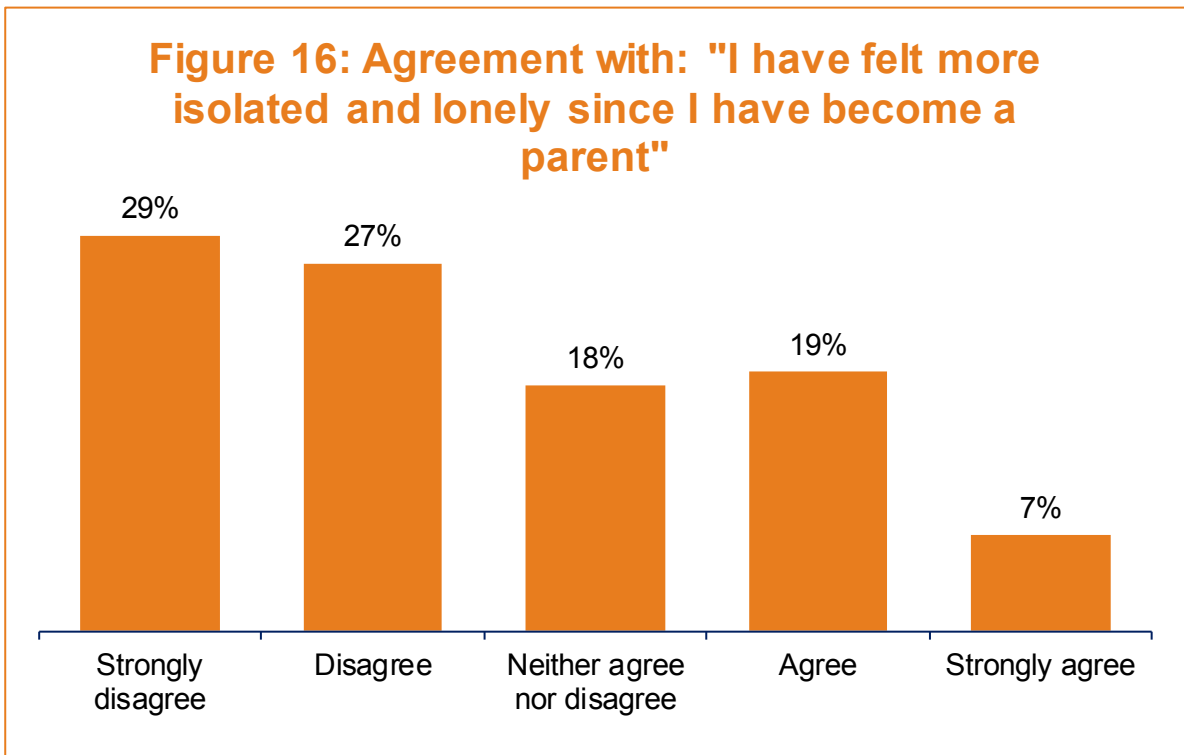
Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

The largest majority of parents strongly agreed with this first statement (43%) whilst 29% agreed. Interestingly, 7% of parents within social groups C2DE strongly disagreed that they had good friends they could call on compared with 4% of ABC1 parents.

Furthermore, White parents were significantly more likely than BME parents to agree with this statement (74% vs.63%).

Responses in relation to the second statement are illustrated below.

**Figure 16: Levels of agreement with statement**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

Just over a quarter of those surveyed (26%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have felt more lonely and isolated since becoming a parent, although 56% disagreed with this.

Those with a child aged 1-2 were significantly more likely to agree they felt more lonely and isolated compared to those with a child under one or over 2 (33% compared to 20% and 23% respectively). This could be related to the time between the busy first few months of being a parent to when a child starts nursery or pre-school.

Homemakers were also more likely to agree they felt lonely and isolated compared to those working full or part-time (34% compared to 23% and 25% respectively). This may correlate with the fact that lower income parents were more likely to agree with this statement compared to higher income parents. There were no noteworthy differences in results according to social grade for this question.

## 4.4 Childcare & Employment

### Employment situation before and after having a child

Respondents were asked what their employment situation was prior to becoming a parent as well as what the situation is now – the results are shown below.

**Table 5 Employment situation pre and post pregnancy**

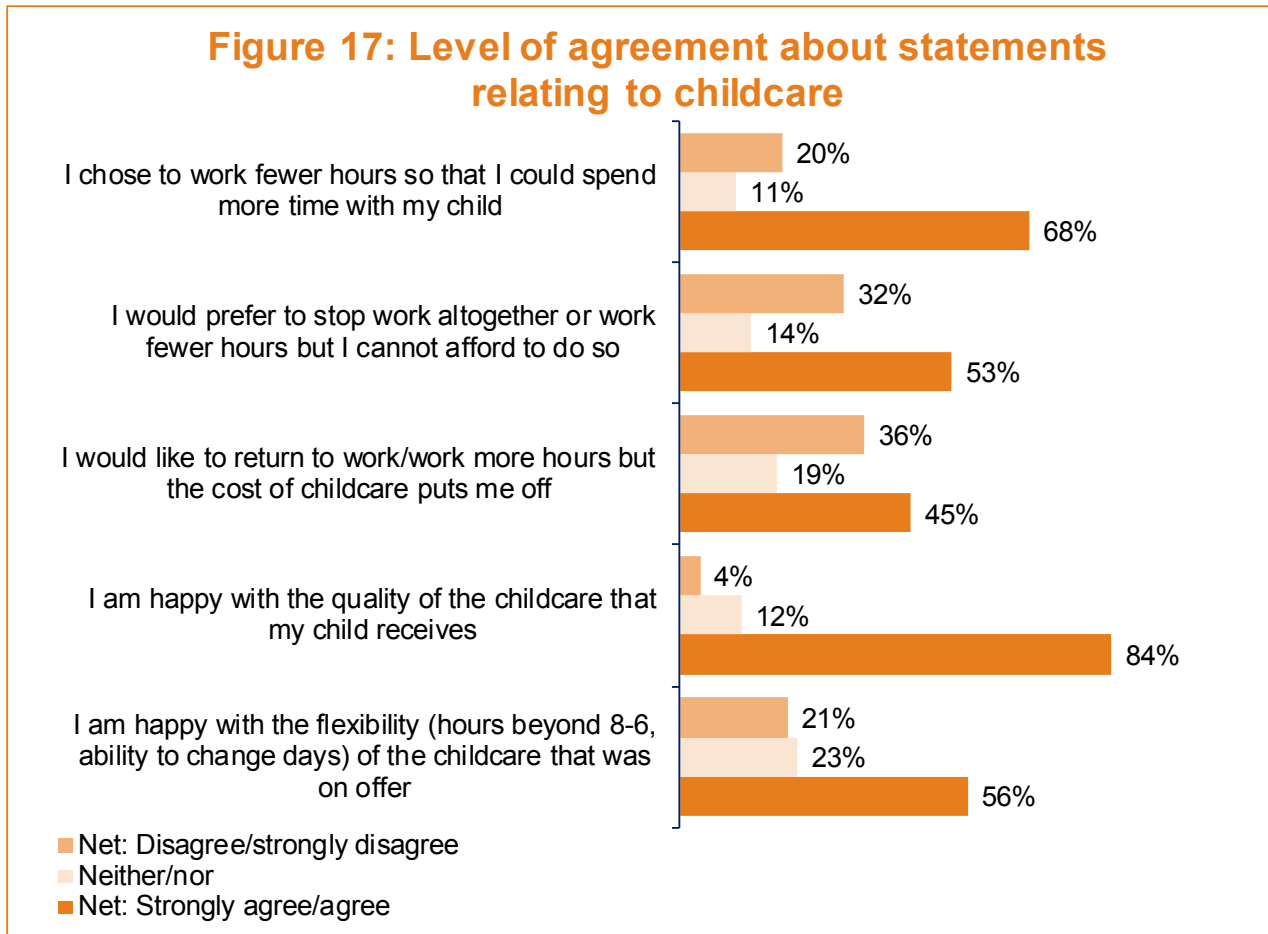
	<b>Before having a child</b>	<b>Now</b>
In full time work	86%	31%
In part-time work	7%	36%
In full-time education	2%	1%
Unemployed looking for work	1%	3%
Unemployed - unable to work	1%	2%
Homemaker	2%	17%
Maternity leave	-	8%
Other	<1%	1%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

As shown above, a significant proportion of parents reduced their hours to part-time or became homemakers following having their first child. When examining data for female respondents only the drop in full-time working is more pronounced, 86% of females were working full-time before having a child falling to 23% after having their child. Middle class (ABC1) parents were significantly more likely than C2DE parents to resume full time work (34% vs. 22%).

Parents were then asked to state the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements concerning childcare. Overall results are shown in the next chart followed by more detailed discussion of the statements which revealed noteworthy findings. Please note those saying a statement was not applicable to them have been removed from the figures so as not to skew responses, therefore base figures vary for each statement.

**Figure 17: Opinions on statements regarding childcare**



Source: Qa Research (N varies from 769 to 857)

**‘I chose to work fewer hours so that I could spend more time with my child’**

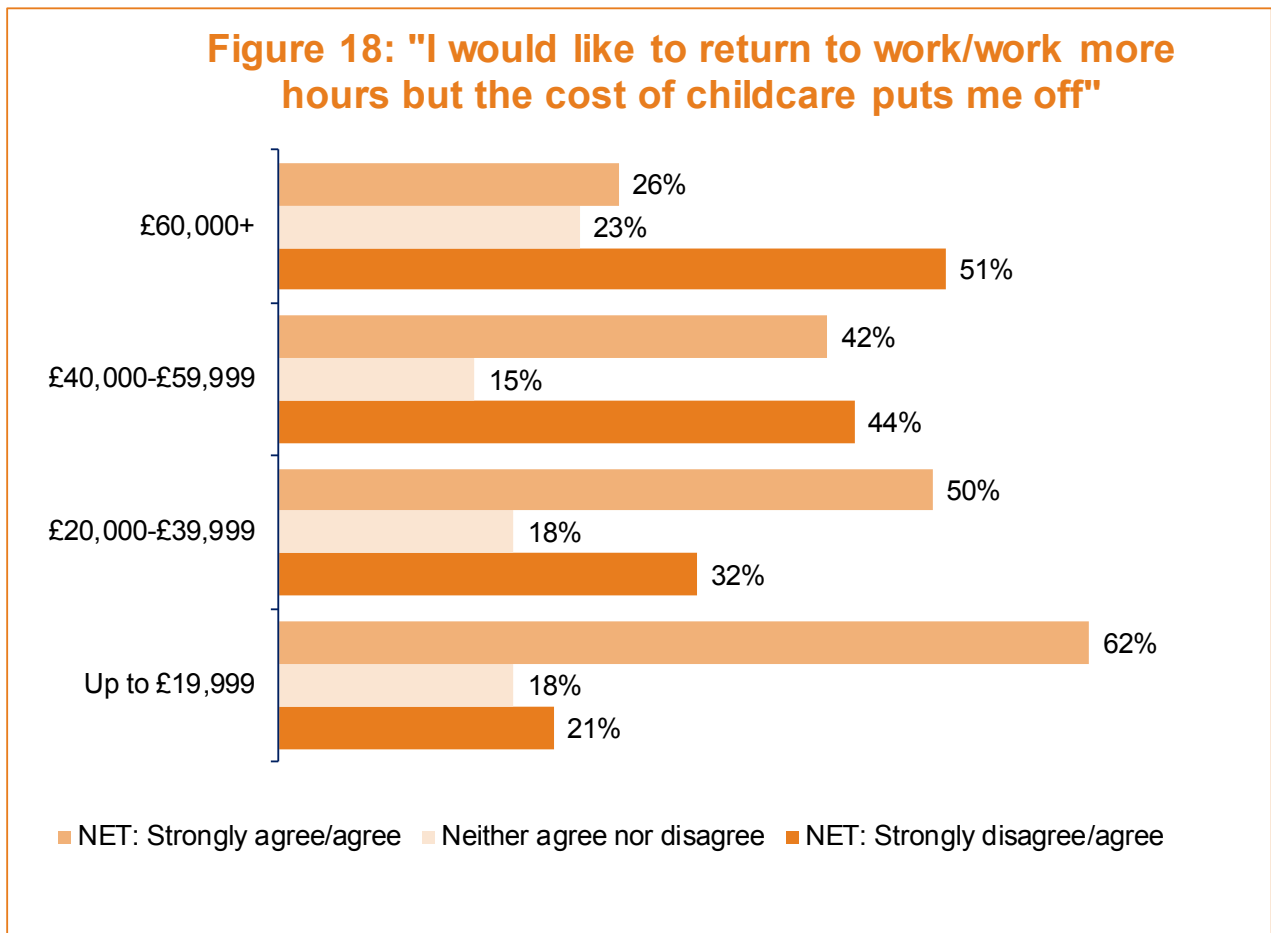
Decisions regarding working hours are linked to socio-economic circumstances with working class (C2DE) parents being more likely to have chosen to work fewer hours to care for their child than ABC1 parents. Middle class (ABC1) parents were more likely than C2DE parents to disagree with the statement ‘I chose to work fewer hours so that I could spend more time with my child’ From this it could be inferred that they have chosen to remain in a job with longer hours for a variety of reasons, e.g. staying in the labour market, enjoyment of the job, wanting to sustain a certain level of income/lifestyle.

**“I would like to return to work/work more hours but the cost of childcare puts me off”**

The cost of childcare is a barrier to working more hours for a significant minority of parents. Over 4 in 10 parents said that they wanted to work more hours, but were deterred by the cost of childcare; 45% of parents overall agreed with the statement “I would like to return to work/work more hours but the cost of childcare puts me off”. Single/lone parents were significantly more likely than those married/living with a partner to agree with this statement (59% vs.43%). There were also differences by social grading, C2DE parents were significantly more likely than ABC1 parents to agree with the statement (57% vs.40%). Levels of agreement were highest amongst the D and E groups (63% and 78%) falling to 39% for social group A.

Levels of agreement with the statement also increased as income levels decreased, as illustrated below, with 62% of those in the up to £19,999 income bracket in agreement falling to 26% in the £60,000+ bracket.

**Figure 18: Opinions on statements regarding childcare**



Source: Qa Research (N=857)

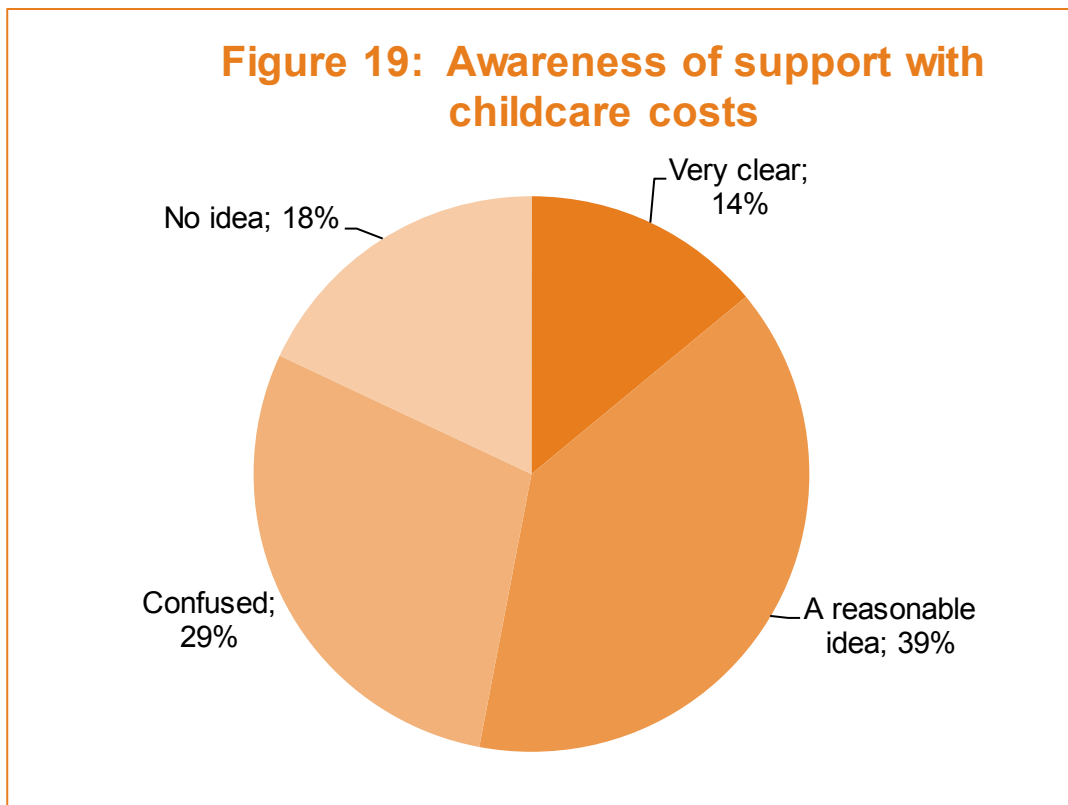
### “I am happy with the quality of the childcare that my child receives”

There is a high level of satisfaction with childcare amongst users, 84% of parents were happy with the quality of childcare. There were no notable differences by social grade or income in relation to this statement, however, White parents were more likely than BME parents to agree with the statement (86% vs 73%).

### Information about support with childcare costs

All parents were asked how well informed they felt about possible support with childcare costs when they became a parent, this support could be from the Government, local authority or employers. Results overall are shown below:

Figure 19: Awareness of support with childcare costs



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

There are very mixed levels of knowledge about support with childcare amongst parents. Just over half of parents had some idea of what was available, with the rest being confused or having no idea at all about what was on offer. Just 14% of parents were very clear about funded childcare support on offer to them and how to access it and 18% had no idea at all. The vast majority of respondents were somewhere in the middle, with almost 4 in 10 (39%) saying they had a reasonable idea of what was on offer and a further 3 in 10 (29%) saying that they were largely confused, knowing that there was something, but not what it was or how to access it.

Data suggests those currently on maternity leave as well as those parents who are unemployed and unable to work were particularly likely to feel confused about possible



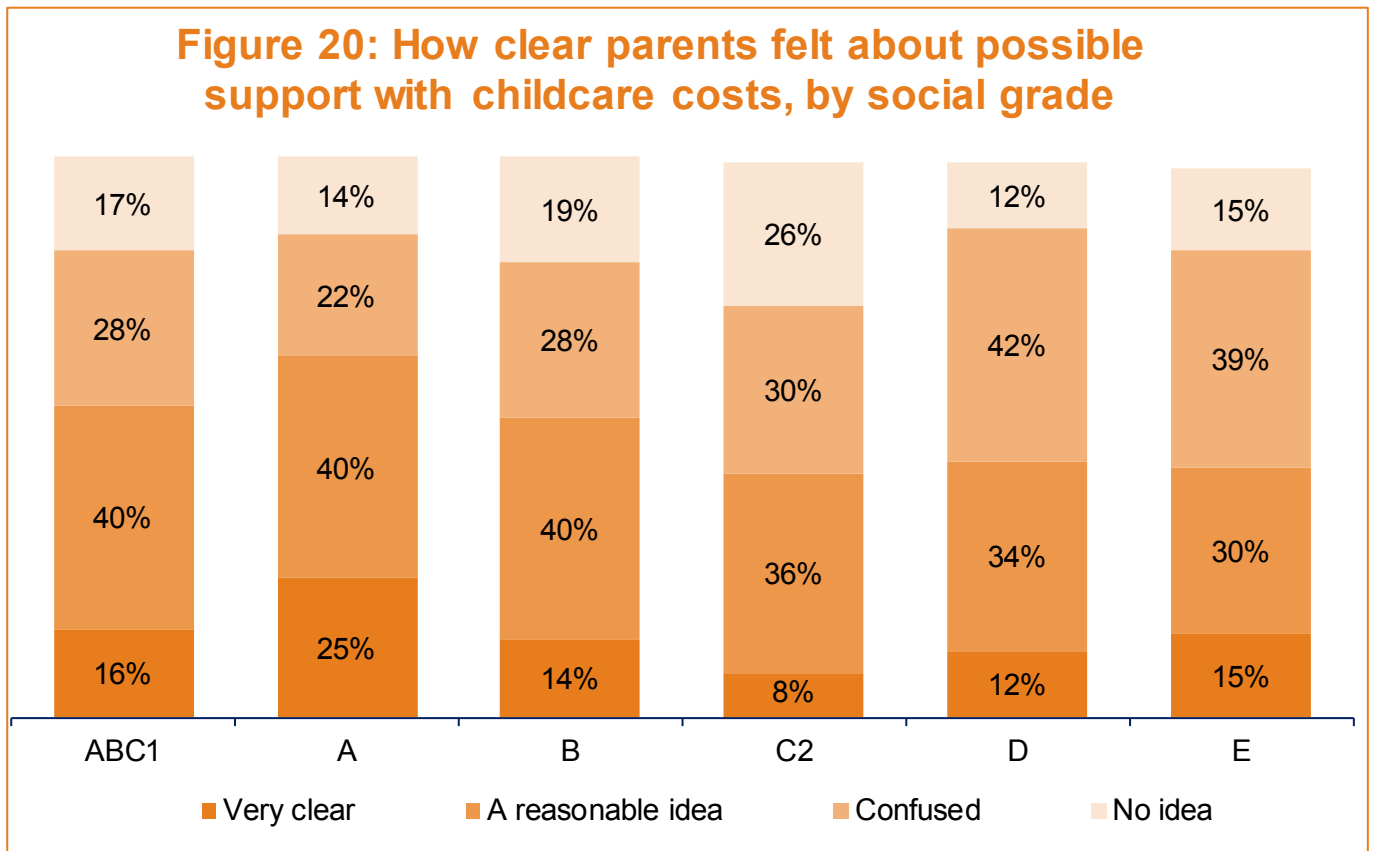
support. Single/lone parents were also significantly more likely to say they felt confused about possible support compared to married/co-habiting parents (37% compared to 27%).

Analysis by income suggests a fifth of those classed as low income households (<£20k) had no idea about possible support with childcare costs (20%) with a further 33% feeling confused by support.

There were no significant differences according to ethnic group for this question.

The next chart shows how responses to this question varied by social grade.

**Figure 20: Awareness of support with childcare costs**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

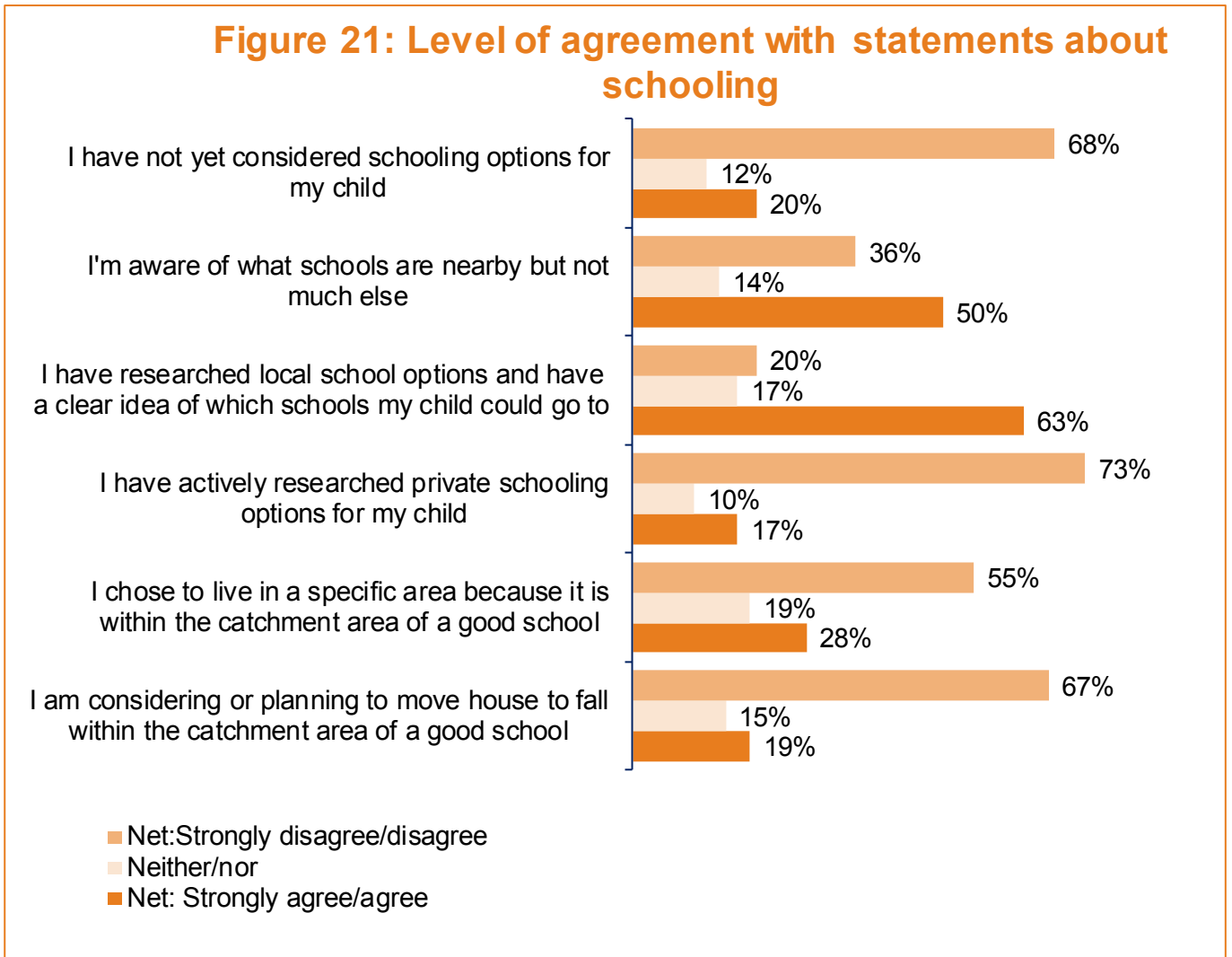
As shown above, a higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 said they had either a very clear or reasonable idea about possible support compared to C2DE parents (56% compared to 47%). Given 53% of C2DE parents were not very clear about possible support this is clearly a noteworthy finding given C2DE parents are more likely to want to go back to work.

Those in social group A were significantly more likely to say they were “very clear” on possible support compared to those in all other social groups (25%). Conversely, those in the C2 group were more likely to say they had “no idea” about possible support compared to those in other social groups (26%).

## 4.5 Schooling

One question within the survey was designed to explore the extent to which parents had already considered schooling options for their child. Figure 21 shows the overall results for this question before results for each statement are discussed in detail.

Figure 21: Thoughts on Schooling



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

As illustrated above, 68% of parents appear to have given some consideration to schooling options for their child, and 63% had researched the local options. A notable minority had chosen to live, or were considering moving to a specific catchment area (28% and 19% respectively).

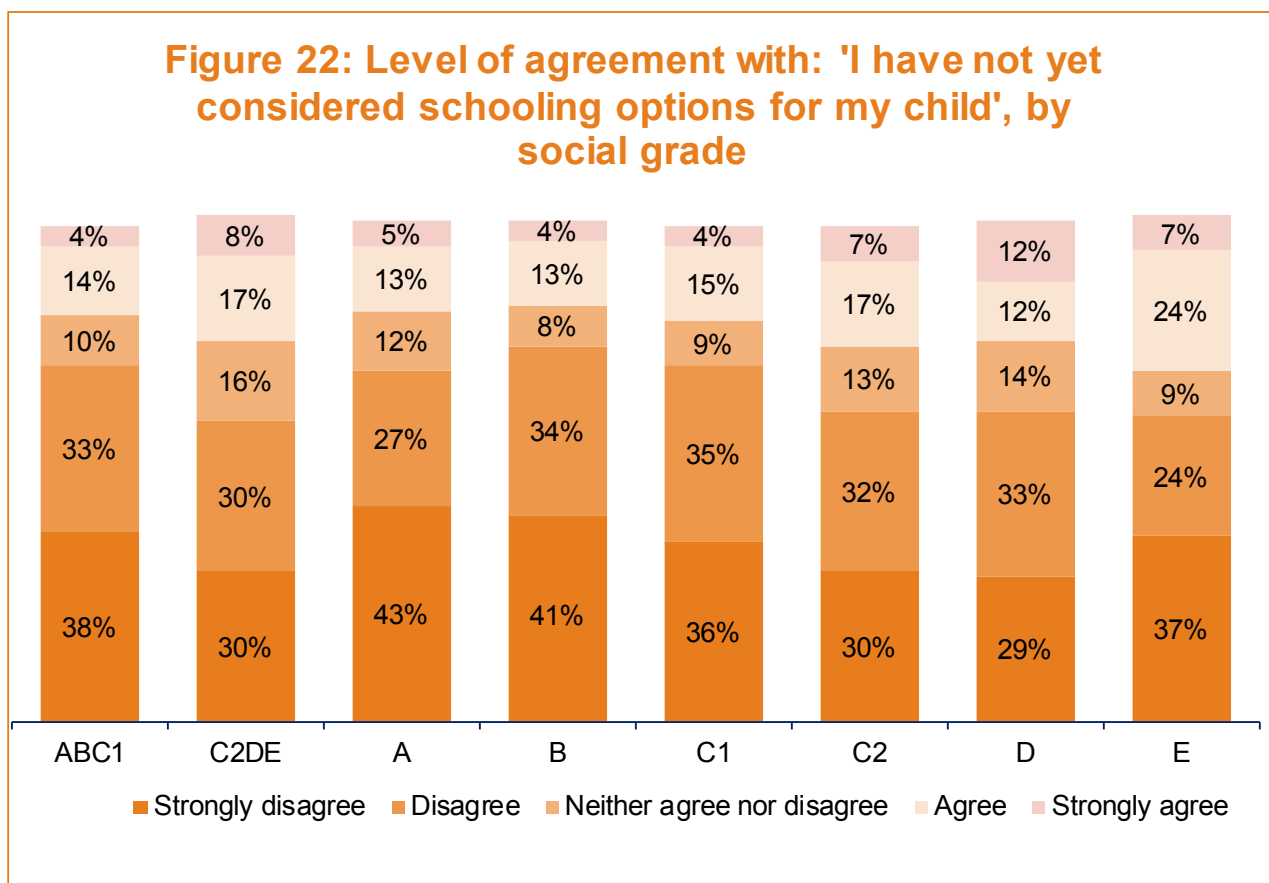
### 'I have not yet considered schooling options for my child'

A majority of parents had given some consideration to schooling options for their child (68%). However, a fifth of parents had not yet considered school options for their child (20%).

There were some differences in response according to the age of child. Those with 2-3 year olds were more likely to have given some consideration to school options than those with younger children (75% had given schooling some consideration compared to 59% of those with 1-2 year olds and 67% of those with children under 1).

There is also a significant difference in levels of agreement with this statement according to the ethnicity of parent. White respondents were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement (meaning they had considered schooling options already) compared to BME respondents (72% compared to 50%). Over a third of BME respondents agreed they had not yet considered schooling options for their child (36%), this rises to 43% of Asian parents specifically. The following chart shows how responses to this statement varied by social grade.

**Figure 22: Levels of agreement with statement by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

As shown, a higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 disagreed with this statement compared to C2DE parents (71% compared to 60%), meaning those in the

higher social groups had given greater consideration to the schooling options for their child.

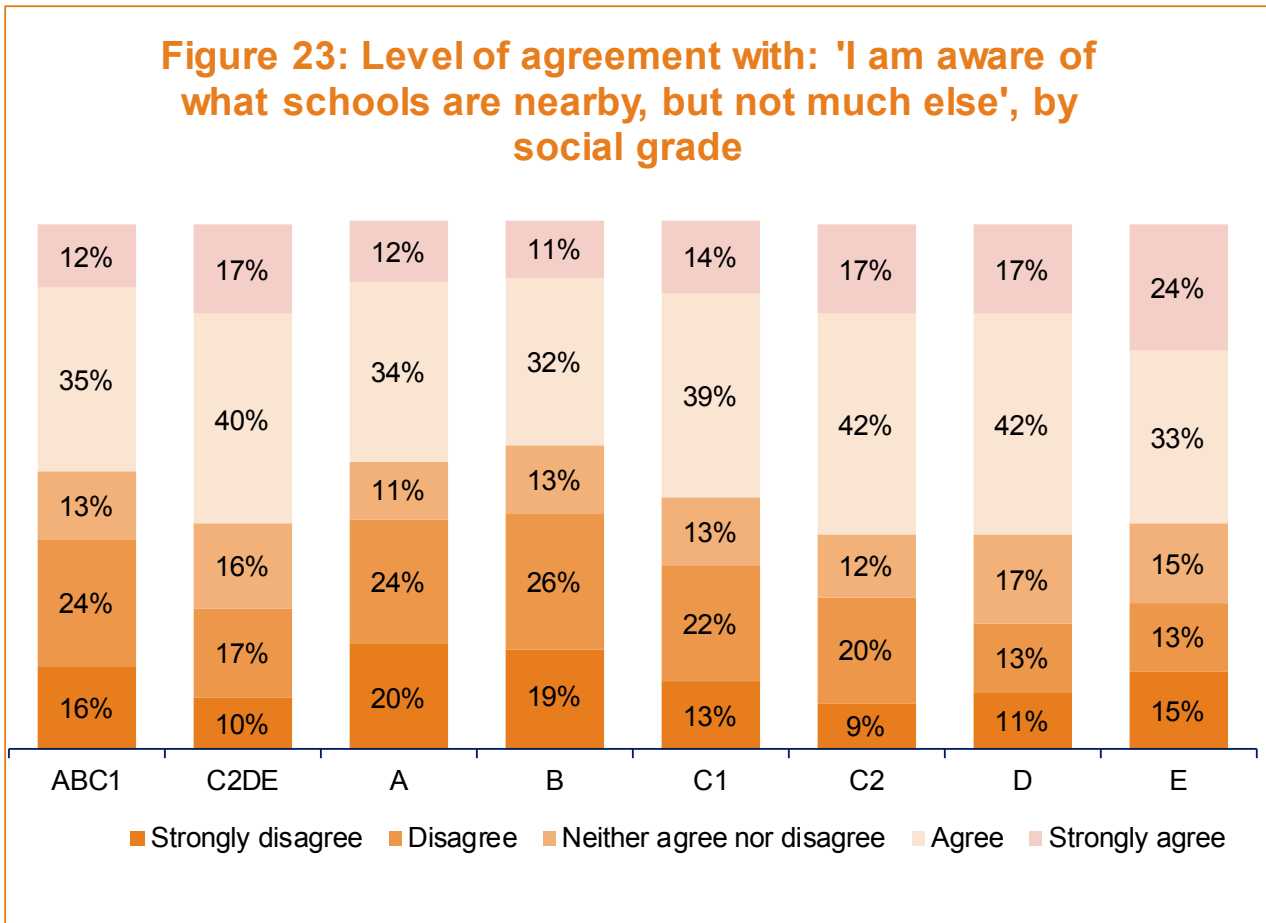
Parents falling within social group A were most likely to strongly disagree with this statement (43%), this percentage then falls for each social group until group E. This may be to do with the fact that group E constitutes 'unemployed' and this could include parents that do not need to work or were formerly employed in a job which would group the household as 'middle class'.

A similar pattern emerges when looking at results by household income. Those with the lowest household income of £0-19,999 were significantly more likely to agree that they hadn't yet considered school options for their child (27%) compared to for example 14% of those with a £60,000+ income. The differences in results according to highest qualification level of parent were not as clear.

**'I'm aware of what schools are nearby but not much else'**

Knowledge of nearby schools is mixed. Half of all parents agreed that they knew what schools are near to them, but not much else about them (50%). A fifth of single/lone parents strongly agreed that this was the case, a significantly higher proportion than for married/co-habiting parents (20% compared to 12%). The following chart shows how responses to this statement varied by social grade.

**Figure 23: Levels of agreement with statement by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

As shown a higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 disagreed with this statement compared to C2DE parents (40% compared to 27%), which may suggest that those in the higher social groups feel they know more about their local schools.

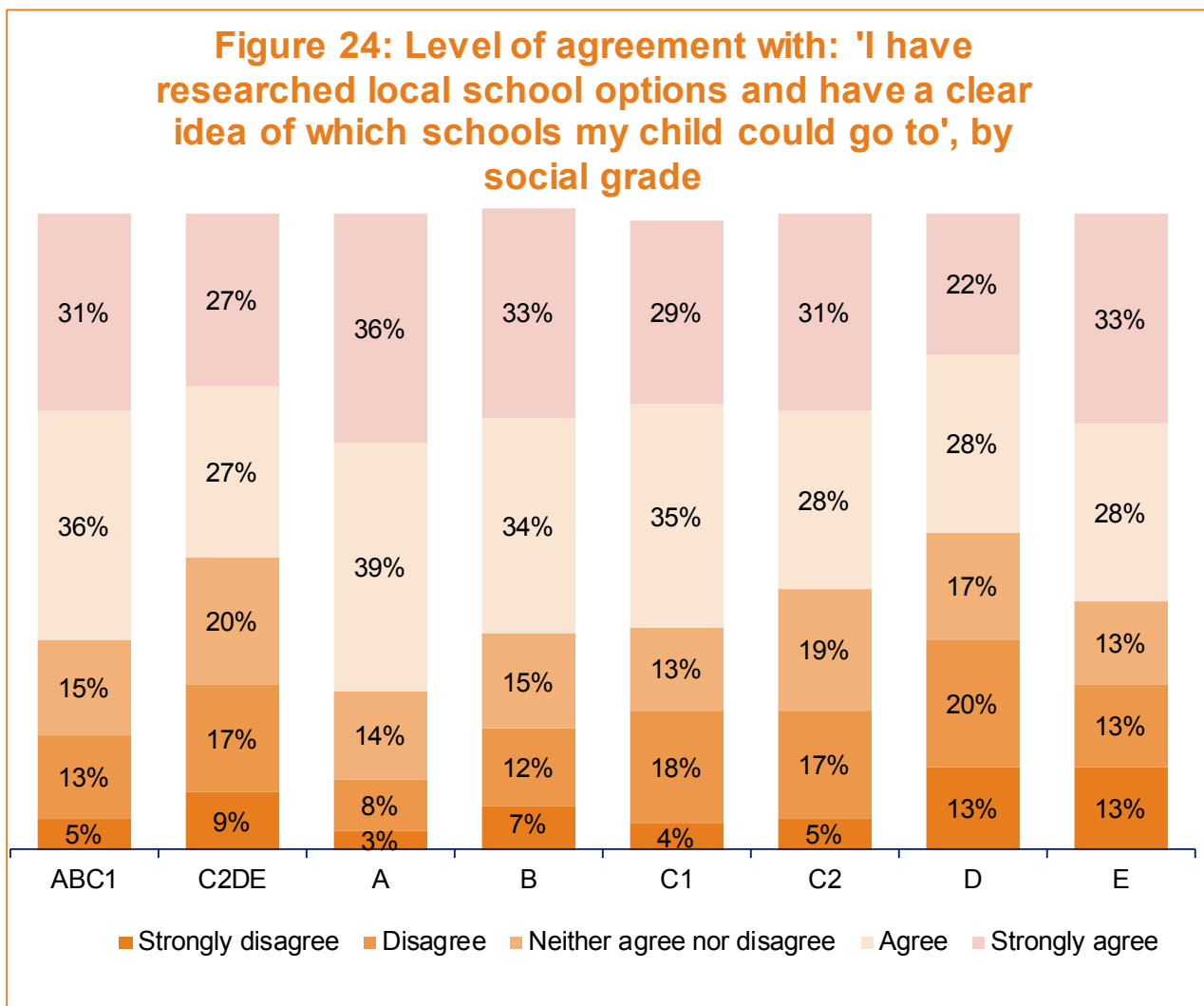
Parents in social groups C2 and D were most likely to agree that they didn't know much about their local schools. This pattern also correlates with income, those with the lowest household income of £0-19,999 were significantly more likely to agree that they didn't know much about the schools nearby (55%) compared to for example 38% of those with a £60,000+ income.

**'I have researched local school options and have a clear idea of which schools my child could go to'**

A majority of parents had undertaken some research into local school options with over six in ten parents (63%) agreeing that they have researched local school options and having a clear idea of which schools their child could go to. Those with more than one child were significantly more likely to strongly agree this was the case than those with one child.

BME parents on the whole were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement compared to White parents (21% compared to 13%). The following chart shows how responses to this statement varied by social grade.

**Figure 24: Levels of agreement with statement by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

As shown a higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 agreed with this statement compared to C2DE parents (67% compared to 54%), so those in higher social groups are more likely to have done some research into school options. Three-quarters of parents in social group A agreed they'd done some research into schools (75%) compared to 50% of those in group D. This pattern also emerges when examining

differences by income, the highest income households were more likely to have done some research than those in the lowest income category.

### **'I have actively researched private schooling options for my child'**

Around a fifth of those surveyed had researched private schooling options for their child (17%). At first glance, this figure seems quite high considering that only 7% of children in England go to private schools<sup>3</sup>. However, actively researching and going onto attend public school are different things. Other research, carried out by the Centre for Economics and Business Research on behalf of Killik & Co<sup>4</sup> has highlighted that private education is becoming increasingly unaffordable even for those families who have traditionally been the target market. For example, in 1990, average day fees, plus extras, for one child would have taken up 19 per cent of the average doctors' salary, however, by 2014, fees for one child accounted for 36 per cent of a doctor's disposable income. Therefore, it seems that increasingly a private education will only be a realistic option for the very highest of earners.

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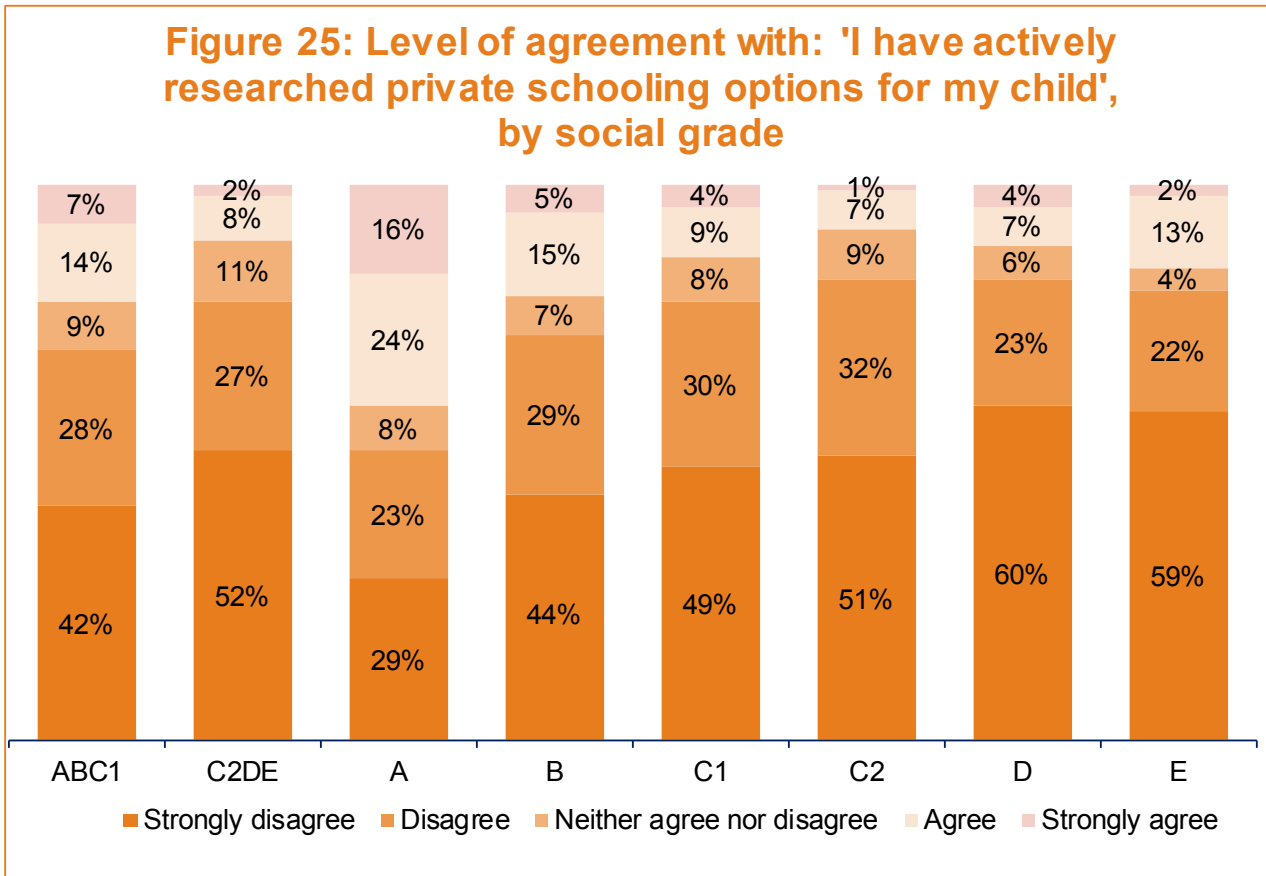
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2014-report>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.killik.com/email/funding-a-private-education/>



Overall, parents in social group A were twice as likely as those in group B to have researched private schooling options (40% vs. 20%). The following chart shows in more detail how responses to this statement varied by social grade.

**Figure 25: Levels of agreement with statement by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

As shown a higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 agreed with this statement compared to C2DE parents (21% compared to 10%), so those in higher social groups are more likely to have done some research into private school options.

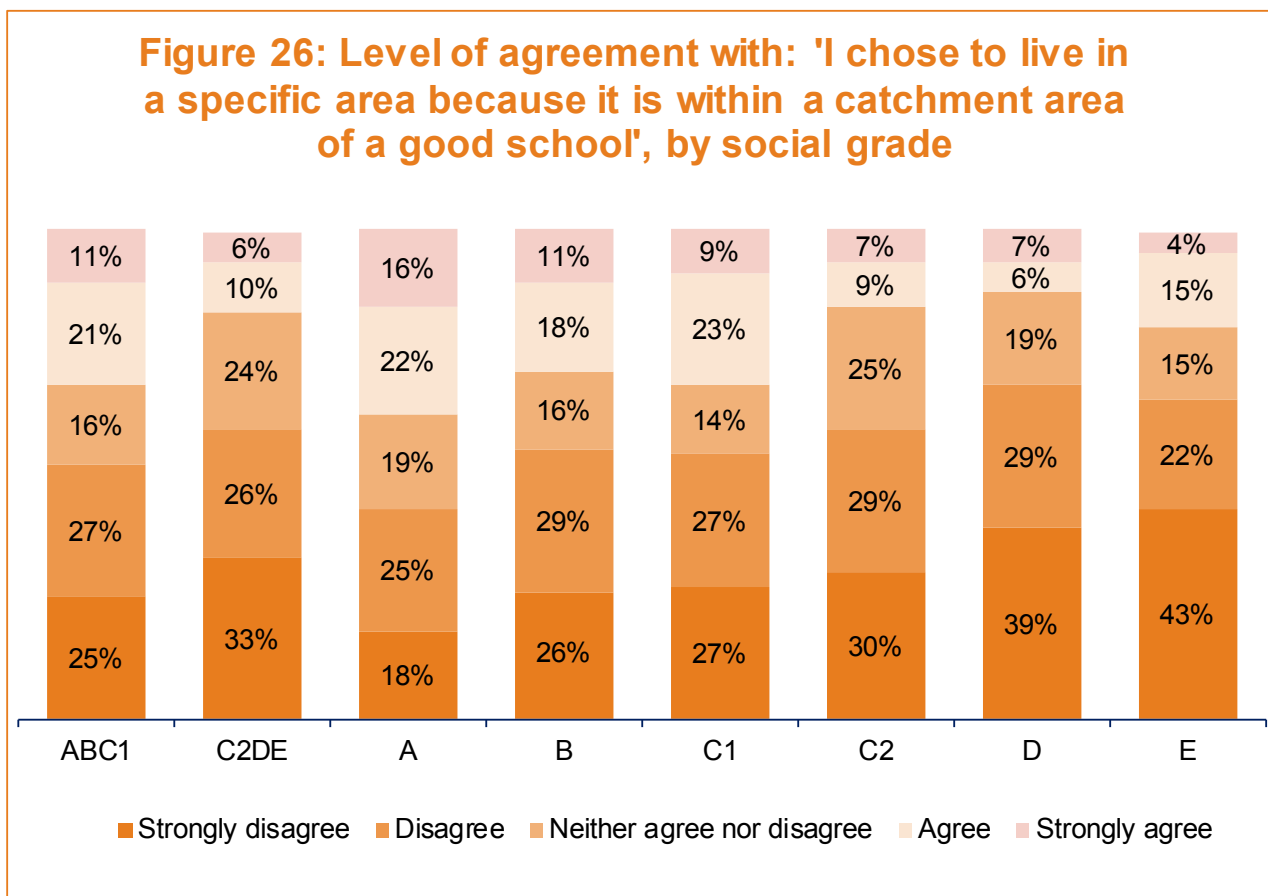
Generally the higher the social grade the more likely the parent is to have researched private schooling options. Four in ten parents (40%) in social group A had done some research into private schooling, comparing with for example 11% of those in group D. Those with a household income of £60,000 per year or above were significantly more likely to researched private schooling options than those with lesser incomes.

Similarly, data shows that the likelihood of having researched private schooling options is greater the higher the level of qualifications a parent has. Just one parent with no qualifications had researched private schooling (9%) compared to 31% of those with post-graduate level qualifications. Finally, BME parents on the whole were significantly more likely to have researched private schooling options compared to White parents (30% compared to 15%).

**'I chose to live in a specific area because it is within the catchment area of a good school'**

Just over a quarter of those surveyed agreed that they had chosen to live in a specific area because it fell within the catchment area of a good school (28%). Middle class parents were twice as likely as working class parents to agree with this statement (32% vs.16%) The following chart shows in more detail how responses to this statement varied by social grade.

**Figure 26: Levels of agreement with statement by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

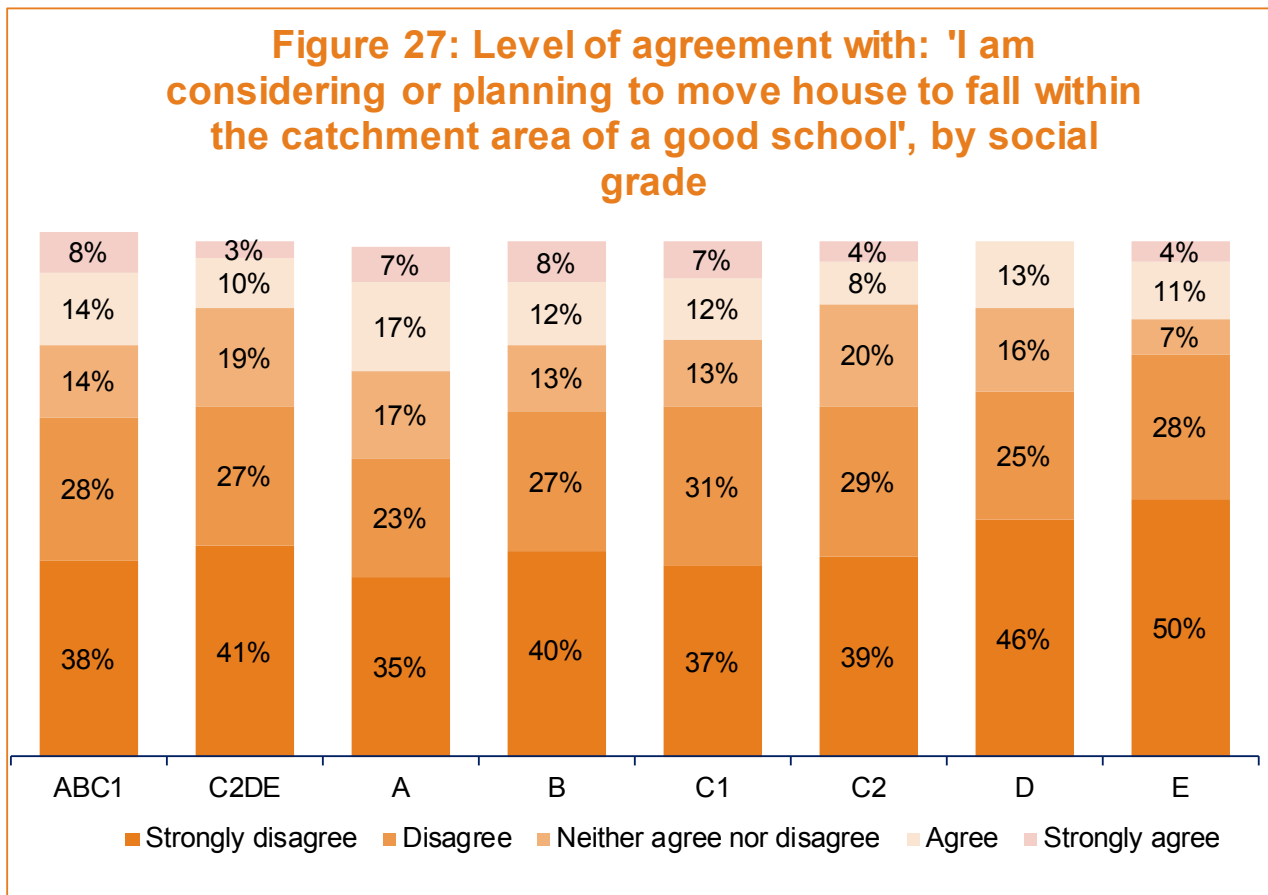
A significantly higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 agreed with this statement compared to C2DE parents (32% compared to 16%), so those in higher social groups are more likely to have actively chosen where to live based on, partly at least, school catchment areas.

Those with a household income of £60,000 per year or above were significantly more likely to agree they had chosen where to live based on school catchment areas than those with lesser incomes (35% compared to 17% of those with a household income of less than £20k a year).

**'I am considering or planning to move house to fall within the catchment area of a good school'**

Just less than a fifth of those surveyed agreed that they are considering or planning to move house to fall within the catchment area of a good school (19%). The following chart shows how responses to this statement varied by social grade, demonstrating clear differences.

**Figure 27: Levels of agreement with statement by social grade**



Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

A significantly higher proportion of parents falling into social groups ABC1 agreed with this statement compared to C2DE parents (22% compared to 13%), so those in higher social groups are more likely to be selecting where to live in future based on, partly at least, school catchment areas.

Those with a household income of £60,000 per year or above were significantly more likely to agree they had chosen where to live based on school catchment areas than those with the lowest incomes (25% compared to 13% of those with a household income of less than £20k a year).

BME parents were also more likely to say this was the case compared to White parents (28% compared to 16%).

## Section 5 Conclusions

Generally, it would appear that parents across all social grades have some common experiences during the early stages of parenting, particularly in terms of wanting advice and support on the issues that concern first time parents, e.g. sleeping and feeding. However, the research does reveal that parents from different socio-economic groups behave differently and have different experiences of some key aspects of early parenthood, which in turn, have implications for social mobility. The key differences appear to be around the extent to which antenatal services and enrichment activities are accessed, and the extent to which information (on financial support with childcare and schooling) is proactively sought and/or understood. Middle class parents were more likely to have accessed antenatal classes/support in general and to have paid for that support. It is perhaps of concern that the main reason for not accessing antenatal classes/support (and this was apparent across the social grades) was parents' perception that they did not need to. Whilst this is a personal choice it may suggest that more needs to be done to demonstrate the benefits of antenatal preparation for the birth and beyond.

The research also suggests that middle class parents were more likely to want a wider range of advice and information in the first six months of parenting and to seek this advice and information from a broader range of sources. This information was not confined to the traditional sources (e.g. health visitors) and in fact middle class parents were more likely to be accessing information via NHS websites and other online parenting websites. Only a small proportion of parents overall paid for support in the first six months, but these parents were more likely to be middle class parents paying for healthcare (e.g. consultations and procedures).

The importance to child development of activities to stimulate and encourage a child's communication and social interaction skills in the early years is well documented. Findings from this research suggest that middle class parents are more likely to be accessing (sometimes multiple types of) enrichment opportunities in the first year of their child's life, particularly those types of activities intended to improve parent/ child communication and interaction, and structured activities which enable school readiness by exposing children to the format of instructor and focused activity. Linked to this point, this research has highlighted the fact that working class parents are more reliant on free/cheaper activities. This has implications, given the trend towards a reduction in the number of Children's Centres that have traditionally provided these types of activities.

To some extent middle class pro-activity went beyond buying in services and included an increased likelihood to develop social networks for themselves and their children - the main reason given for paying for antenatal classes and support was to gain access to a group of like-minded people. The research findings also indicate that there are some differences in the strength of social support networks amongst different groups of parents, with C2DE and BME parents being less likely to feel that they had a support network of friends who are parents that they could call on for advice and to have had regular contact with other parents in their first year as a parent.

There is a tendency for employment patterns to change following the birth of the first child and the research supports this with a higher proportion of parents returning to work on a part-time basis; middle class parents were more likely to maintain full-time employment. There is also evidence to suggest that the issue of the prohibitive cost of

childcare remains as pertinent as ever. Parents in the lower income brackets and social groups were significantly more likely to either perceive or experience the cost of childcare as a barrier to entering employment or increasing current working hours (with both likely to influence decisions about employment), although encouragingly findings on parental perceptions of childcare quality are encouraging. Levels of awareness on the support available with childcare costs varied with middle class parents being more likely to have a clear idea about the support available to them.

It also appears that middle class parents are more likely to be proactively seeking information and making plans for their child's education well before their child has turned four. Middle class parents were more likely to have already selected an area to live in or be planning to change where they live to ensure that they fall in the catchment area of their preferred school for their first child.

To summarise, the experiences of early parenting differs according to social grade which clearly has implications for social mobility. Middle class parents are accessing more services antenatally and in the first year of their child's life, appear to be more likely to be developing social connections for themselves and their child, and are also more informed about financial support with childcare costs and school options. This emphasises the importance of the role of government, local authorities (including health visitors) and providers of services for parents of young children in providing both clear information about what is on offer, as well as no or low cost support and activities for parents and young children from the antenatal period onwards which enable social interaction between parents. There is a particular need to ensure that information, support and activities are accessible to parents from the lowest socio-economic groups.

## Appendix 1 Respondent Profile

The following tables indicate the demographic profile of respondents.

**Table 6 Q1a: Number of Children**

Number of children	Count	%
1	672	67%
2	305	31%
3	19	2%
4	2	<1%
5	1	<1%
6	1	<1%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 7 Q1b: Age of Children**

Age of children	Count	%
Under 1	173	17%
1-2 years	335	34%
2-3 years	749	75%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 8 Q8a: Gender**

Gender	Count	%
Male	149	15%
Female	851	85%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 9 Q8b: Marital Status**

Marital Status	Count	%
Married/living with partner	861	86%
Single/lone parent	135	14%
Other	-	
Prefer not to say	4	<1%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 10 Q8c: Age of Parent**

Age of parent	Count	%
Under 20	3	<1%
20-29	274	27%
30-39	602	60%
40 or over	119	12%
Prefer not to say	2	<1%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 11 Q8d: Ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity of parent</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>WHITE</b>	866	87%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British Irish	820	82%
Irish	3	<1%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	-	
Any other White background	43	4%
<b>MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS</b>	25	3%
White and Black Caribbean	11	1%
White and Black African	2	<1%
White and Asian	4	<1%
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background	8	1%
<b>ASIAN/ASIAN BRITISH</b>	65	7%
Indian	30	3%
Pakistani	13	1%
Bangladeshi	8	1%
Chinese	8	1%
Any other Asian background	6	1%
<b>BLACK/BLACK BRITISH</b>	27	3%
African	14	1%
Caribbean	10	1%
Any other Black background	3	<1%
<b>OTHER ETHNIC GROUP</b>	9	1%
Arab	4	<1%
Any other ethnic group	5	1%
<b>BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC</b>	172	17%
Prefer not to say	8	1%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 12 Q8e: Highest Qualification**

<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
No qualifications	11	1%
CSE/GCSE/O-level/NVQ 1&2	177	18%
A-level/NVQ 3/National Certificate/Diploma	312	31%
Degree BA/BSC/HND/HNC	336	34%
Post-graduate degree MA/MSC/Mphil	148	15%
Other	16	2%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 13 Q8o: Household Income**

Household Income	Count	%
Less than £10,000	48	5%
£10,000 - £19,999	123	12%
£20,000 - £29,999	147	15%
£30,000 - £39,999	167	17%
£40,000 - £49,999	121	12%
£50,000 - £59,999	113	11%
£60,000 -£69,999	67	7%
£70,000- £79,999	54	5%
£80,000-£89,999	24	2%
£90,000 or more	55	6%
Prefer not to say	81	8%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 14 Social Grade**

Social grade	Count	%
A: High managerial, administrative or professional	110	12%
B: Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional	311	34%
C1: Administrative or professional	223	24%
C2: Skilled manual workers	151	16%
D: Semi and unskilled manual workers	83	9%
E: State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only	46	5%
Net: ABC1	685	69%
Net: C2DE	315	32%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)

**Table 15 Region**

Region	Count	%
East Midlands	101	10%
East of England	137	14%
London	144	14%
North East	57	6%
North West	116	12%
South East	136	14%
South West	101	10%
West Midlands	114	11%
Yorkshire & the Humber	94	9%

Source: Qa Research (N = 1,000)



## Appendix 2 Copy of Survey

Good afternoon / evening. My name is <NAME> I am calling from Qa Research on behalf of the Social Mobility Commission (an advisory body which monitors the progress of Government and others in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom). We are carrying out surveys with parents who have children under the age of four about their experiences of antenatal services, advice and support, and activities undertaken with their firstborns.

First, can I check whether you have a child under the age of four and that this is your oldest child? [if their oldest child is aged four or above thank and close]

If 'Yes'.... Would you be willing to complete this short survey with me? It should take a maximum of 15 minutes. I can call you back at a different time if now is not convenient?

Just to reassure you this interview will be carried out according to the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. Your answers will be treated in confidence and the findings of this survey will be reported anonymously. If there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, then please let me know. The call may be recorded for quality purposes. Is that ok?

Should you have any queries or concerns regarding the survey you can contact the Commission on 0207 340 8397 or email [contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk)

### Section 1: About your family

Just for a bit of context to begin with please can you tell me...

Q1a. How many children do you have?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Q1b. How old is your child/children?

*Multiple choice*

- Under 1
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years

For those with more than one child read out: I'd like you to think about your oldest child when I ask you the next few questions as we're particularly interested in people's experiences with their firstborns.

## Section 2: Antenatal Classes

Q2a. Thinking back to when you were pregnant with your oldest child, did you undertake any of the following?

*Multiple choice*

Attend NHS antenatal/parentcraft classes

Attend NCT classes

Online NHS classes

Attend classes or receive support from someone else (not including your regular midwife)  
- paid for

Attend classes or receive support from someone else (not including your regular midwife)  
– not paid for

Please state

*(for last two options)*

None of these

*Ask Q2b if selected NCT or other paid for at Q2a*

Q2b. Why did you choose a paid for option for your antenatal classes? Choose one option only (the main reason)

I would have taken an NHS/free class, but it wasn't offered

I would have taken an NHS/free class, but it was full

I would have taken an NHS/free class, but it wasn't convenient (time/distance)

I wanted more hours than the free alternative

I felt that a paid for class would be more likely to give me access to a group of like-minded people

Other

Please state

*Ask Q2c if selected NHS or other free at Q2a*

Q2c. I am now going to read out some statements and I would like to you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree....

I would have liked more information and support but I could not afford to pay for it

I received all of the advice and support I needed for free

I would not pay for advice and support even though I could probably afford to

*Ask 2d If selected None of these at Q2a*

Q2d. Why did you not undertake any antenatal classes?

I would have taken an NHS/free class, but it wasn't offered

I would have taken an NHS/free class, but it was full

I would have taken an NHS/free class, but it wasn't convenient (time/distance)

Didn't feel I needed to

Concerns about feeling judged

Nervous about being in a group

Preferred to prepare in other ways (books etc)

Child was born early

Other

Please state

Q2e. How much do you estimate that you spent (including if someone else paid for you) on advice and preparation for parenting/labour before your baby was born? This includes the cost of any classes we've just discussed as well as things like books and other labour/parenting preparation but not baby items e.g. moses basket/crib etc .

Nothing

Less than £50

Between £50-£100

Between £100-£300

Between £300-£500

More than £500

Can't remember/don't know

### Section 3: Advice & Support

Q3a. Thinking of your first 6 months as a parent, what were the main issues you wanted advice/information on?

*Multiple response – a) unprompted and b) prompted list – if so prompted should also include by default any unprompted responses*

Sleep

Breastfeeding

Bottle feeding

Feeding generally

Weaning

Baby health and development

First aid

Parenting generally

Managing relationships

Something else?

Please state

No advice/support required *skip to Q3d*

Q3b. Generally, who or what did you use as sources of support/information on these issues?

*Read out - Multiple choice*

A post-natal parenting class

Midwife or health visitor

Another health professional/advisor (e.g. GP)

Voluntary sector groups/advisors (i.e. NCT breastfeeding clinics)

A paid specialist or advisor (e.g. maternity nurse, sleep specialist, breastfeeding consultant, dietician)

Please state

Family

Friends

NHS website or NHS information emails

Parenting websites/parenting emails/online clubs (e.g. Mumsnet/NetMums/Babycentre etc)

Pregnancy/parenting books/magazines

Other

Please state

Q3c Please choose the three most important

*Bring up options selected at Q3b*

Q3d. Did you (or someone else on your behalf) pay for any specific healthcare provision, advice or support for you/your baby in the first 6 months?

Yes

No

*if yes at Q3d ask Q3e*

Q3e. What did you pay for?

*Read out - Multiple choice*

Healthcare - including consultations and procedures – i.e. for tongue tie

Maternity nurse/nanny in early days/weeks

Breastfeeding consultant

Sleep specialist

Weaning

Osteopath for baby

Other

Please state

Q3f. How much did you spend overall (on the options selected in the previous question?)

*Select one only*

Less than £100

Between £100-250

Between £250-500

£500-1,000 More than £1,000

Can't remember/don't know

#### Section 4: Activities with your child

The next few questions are about activities and services you may have used with your child. Again here we're thinking about things you did with your firstborn.

Q4a. Did your child take part in any of the following activities before they turned 1? You can also include when your partner or other family members or childcarers have taken your child to such groups.

Q4b. How often did your child attend these activities?

*Multiple choice. If 'none' at 4a don't ask Q4b. Ask Q4b for each option selected at Q4a*

Baby massage/baby signing

Yoga sessions/gym/Tumble tots

Swimming – tutored/classes

Swimming – just family with child

Singing/music/storytelling groups

Creative art classes/messy play

Informal play groups/stay and play

Other structured groups/activities

Please state

None of these – *ask Q4d*

Weekly or more

Once or twice a month

Monthly

A few times in the year

For a set number of weeks (courses)

One off occasion

Q4c. Can you give me an estimate of how much you roughly spent per week on activity groups in that first year? (on average)

Nothing

Less than £5

Between £5-£10

Between £10-£20

Between £20-30

Over £30 a week

Cannot remember/don't know

Unsure – (included in nursery/childminder fees)

Someone else paid (e.g. grandparent)

Q4d. How often did you meet up with other parents of children around the same age as your baby before your child was 1? This could include get togethers of friends you met at antenatal/NCT, visiting or meeting individual friends and meeting with groups at Children's Centres

Not at all

3 or more times a week

Once or twice a week

A few times a month

Monthly

A few times in the year

For a set number of weeks (courses)

Q4e - I am now going to read out a statement and I would like to you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree....  
I feel like I have a group of good friends who are parents that I could call on for advice whenever I need them

I have felt more isolated and lonely since I have become a parent

*Ask if none selected at Q4a*

Q4f. Were there any particular reasons why you/your child didn't take part?

I/my child didn't want to

Not suited to my child's needs

Not much available in my area

Too expensive

Lack of time due to work commitments

Other

Please state

## Section 5: Childcare & Employment

Q5a. Before you became a parent were you?...

In full time work

In part-time work

In full-time education

Unemployed – looking for work

Unemployed - unable to work

Homemaker

Other

Please state

Q5b. What is your situation now?

- No change
- Still on maternity leave
- In full time work
- In part time work
- In full-time education
- Unemployed – looking for work
- Unemployed - unable to work
- Homemaker
- Other
- Please state

Q5c. I am now going to read out some statements and I would like to you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree....or not applicable?)

- I chose to work fewer hours so that I could spend more time with my child
- I would prefer to stop work altogether or work fewer hours but I cannot afford to do so
- I would like to return to work/work more hours but the cost of childcare puts me off
- I am happy with the quality of the childcare that my child receives
- I am happy with the flexibility (hours beyond 8-6, ability to change days) of the childcare that was on offer

Q5d. When you became a parent, how clear were you about the help on offer from the Government, local authority or your employer to help you with childcare costs?

*Select one only*

- Very clear – I knew exactly what I was entitled to and knew how to claim it
- I had a reasonable idea – I knew there was some help available and how I might get it, but I wasn't clear exactly how much I was eligible for/what to do
- Confused – I knew there was some help available but had no idea how much it would mean for me and how to get it
- No idea - I didn't know that there would be any help available to me

## Section 6: Schooling

Q6a. I am now going to read out some statements and I would like to you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree....

- I have not yet considered schooling options for my child
- I'm aware of what schools are nearby but not much else
- I have researched local school options and have a clear idea of which school/s my child could go to
- I have actively researched private schooling options for my child
- I chose to live in a specific area because it is within the catchment area of a good school
- I am considering or planning to move house to fall within the catchment area of a good school

## Section 7: Profile Information

Just to check we are speaking to a broad range of parents I have a final few questions to ask you.

Q7a. Interviewer to code Gender

Male

Female

Q7b. Are you...?

*Single choice*

Married/living with partner

Single/lone parent

Other [do not prompt]

Please state

*If other*

PREFER NOT TO SAY [DO NOT PROMPT]

Q7c. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

Under 20

20-29

30-39

40 or over

PREFER NOT TO SAY [DO NOT PROMPT]

Q7d. What is your ethnic background/origin?

WHITE

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British

Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background

Please describe

MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background

Please describe

ASIAN/ASIAN BRITISH

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background

Please describe



BLACK/BLACK BRITISH

African

Caribbean

Any other Black background

Please describe

OTHER ETHNIC GROUP

Arab

Any other ethnic group

Please describe

PREFER NOT TO SAY [DO NOT PROMPT]

Q7e. Which of these best describes the highest qualification you have obtained up to now?

No qualifications

CSE/GCSE/O-level/NVQ 1&2

A-level/NVQ 3/National Certificate/Diploma

Degree BA/BSC/HND/HNC

Post graduate degree MA/MSC/Mphil

Other

Please describe

Q7f. What is the occupation of the chief income earner in your household?

PREFER NOT TO SAY – DO NOT PROMPT

Q7g. Does their role require a graduate or senior professional qualification i.e. a degree, HND etc?

Yes

No

Q7h. Do they have any rank or seniority in their role?

Yes

No

*If 'Yes', Q7i What is that?*

Q7j. Is this person self-employed?

Yes

No

*If 'Yes', Q7k How many employees do they employ?*

1 – 4

5 – 24

25+

*If 'No', Q7l. How many employees in their organisation?*

1 – 24

25 – 199

200+

Q7m. Are they responsible for managing any staff?

Yes

No

*If 'Yes', Q7n.How many?*

1 – 4

5 – 24

25+

Q7o. Which of the following best describes your household's total gross annual income?

Less than £10,000

£10,000 - £19,999

£20,000 - £29,999

£30,000 - £39,999

£40,000 - £49,999

£50,000 - £59,999

£60,000 -£69,999

£70,000- £79,999

£80,000-£89,999

£90,000 or more

PREFER NOT TO SAY – DO NOT PROMPT

Q7p. Finally can I ask whether you are happy with the way this interview has been conducted?

Yes

No

Comments

*If no only*

Thank you so much for taking part in the survey with me. The survey findings will be on the Social Mobility Commission's website in December.

INTERVIEWER NOTE: CALCULATE SOCIAL GRADE BASED ON Q7f to Q7n THEN CODE BELOW

A: High managerial, administrative or professional

B: Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional

C1: Administrative or professional

C2: Skilled manual workers

D: Semi and unskilled manual workers

E: State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only



Social Mobility &  
Child Poverty  
Commission

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