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Holiday childcare and play services slashed in 60 per cent of local authorities

Survey reveals widespread reduction in services following spending cuts

A new survey out today ahead of the summer holidays from childcare charity Daycare Trust, has shown that local authorities across the country have made cuts to their play services and holiday playschemes, despite rising numbers of parents reporting shortages.

Daycare Trust's tenth annual Holiday Childcare Costs Survey, sponsored by Computershare Voucher Services (CVS), is compiled from figures submitted by local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. It compares by region the cost and availability of childcare provision during the school holidays, and is being released as part of National Childcare Week (11-18 July 2011).

This year's survey found that:

- 62% of local authorities in England have cut their budgets for childcare and play services since last year; and almost 50% are offering a decreased level of holiday childcare provision.
- 52% of local authorities in England said that parents had reported a shortage of holiday childcare in the last 12 months; and 89% did not have enough childcare across the local authority for either disabled children or those aged 12 and over.
- In the last year costs have increased by 3% in England but there is huge variation across the regions. In North East England costs have increased by around 20% in the last year.
- The average weekly cost for holiday childcare is £96.85 in England, £89.79 in Scotland and £81.98 in Wales- compared to a weekly average in England of £58.45 ten years ago.

Recommendations in the report include:

- Local authorities should protect holiday playschemes and subsidies for lower income families; they must not implement cuts that will lead to increased levels of child poverty and put parents' jobs at risk.
- Central government should ensure that local authorities meet their obligations under the Childcare Act 2006 and ensure that there is sufficient childcare for all working parents.
- There should be better government support for, and promotion of, flexible working - including term-time only contracts, with new employees given the right to request flexible work at the start of their employment and not just after 26 weeks in the job.

- Regulations should be amended to allow self-employed parents to claim childcare vouchers.
- Families Information Services and Children's information Service helplines should be supported by local authorities, so that they are able to provide a full service to parents.

Anand Shukla, acting Chief Executive of Daycare Trust said:

"We are extremely concerned that play services and holiday playschemes are falling victim to local government spending cuts. These are essential services that families across the country rely upon and we know that without these services many parents will have no option but to give up their job or take a period of unpaid leave that they can ill afford, in order to look after their children.

If families are able to access childcare, then they can expect a hefty bill. Once again, we have seen an increase in the cost of holiday childcare this year. In some regions, costs have risen dramatically since last year, putting a huge strain on families' summer finances. For those with two or more children, the cost of holiday childcare can run to thousands of pounds – the equivalent cost of a family holiday abroad."

Julian Foster, Managing Director of Computershare Voucher Services commented:

"It's worrying to see such a widespread drop in local authority funding for holiday childcare and what this research highlights is that it's now more important than ever for those clubs, organisations and schemes that have retained funding or are privately run to make childcare as accessible and affordable as possible,

"By registering with the relevant regulator – like Ofsted in England – and a childcare voucher scheme, holiday childcare organisations can enable parents to make pre-tax salary savings on their childcare – reducing the pinch felt by rising costs and the likelihood that they have to take leave from work in order to make sure their children are cared for during the holidays."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The findings of the holiday costs survey are based on data received from 123 Local Authority Family Information Services and Children's Information Services across England, Scotland and Wales, surveyed in May and June 2011.
2. Typical weekly cost by region and percentage change 2010 – 2011:

Region	Typical weekly Cost (public sector) 2011	Public sector change	Typical weekly Cost (PVI) 2011	PVI % change	Overall average weekly cost	Mean percentage change
	2010-11		2010-11		2011	
East of England	£76.07	-8.3%	£100.82	-15.5%	88.45	-12.60%
East Midlands	£97.50	29.7%	£90.65	2.2%	94.08	14.80%
Greater London	£82.11	11.0%	£104.11	2.1%	93.11	5.80%
North East	£94.30	49.6%	£114.46	5.9%	104.38	22%
North West	£95.53	13.3%	£113.94	7.2%	104.75	9.90%
South East	£97.69	-0.7%	£121.14	7.1%	109.41	3.50%
South West	£102.50	7.0%	£119.38	5.6%	110.94	6.20%
West Midlands	£81.25	24.4%	£101.32	9.3%	91.29	15.50%
Yorkshire & Humber	£65.20	-37.5%	£86.73	-11.5%	75.27	-25.60%
England (Regional Average)	£88.02	6.6%	£105.84	1.2%	96.85	3.50%
Wales	£59.49	1.0%	£104.47	2.8%	81.98	2.20%
Scotland	£78.60	-24.6%	£100.92	4.6%	89.79	-10.6%
Great Britain ¹	£84.57	2.6%	£105.27	1.7%	94.78	1.90%

3. For more information about National Childcare Week, which is supported by Haven Fun & Fitness, NES Arnold and Chapman Entertainment, visit <http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/national-childcare-week-2011.html>

To obtain copies of the Holiday Childcare Costs Survey 2011 or to arrange case studies or interviews contact press office at Daycare Trust on 020 7940 7525 (out of hours 07796 886 648).

¹ The average for Great Britain is the mean of the 10 English regions, Scotland and Wales.

ABOUT DAYCARE TRUST

Daycare Trust is the national childcare charity, campaigning for quality affordable accessible childcare for all and raising the voices of children, parents and carers. Founded by a group of parents in 1986, we are currently celebrating twenty-five years of championing childcare. We advise parents and carers, providers, employers, trade unions and policymakers on childcare issues. We recognise that everyone is unique and we value difference in our communities. We listen to all views and are committed to act without prejudice.

We offer a range of information on childcare, including finding and choosing childcare, and help with childcare costs. Visit www.daycaretrust.org.uk and www.payingforchildcare.org.uk for information.

Daycare Trust is a member of the Campaign to End Child Poverty, www.endchildpoverty.org.uk.

ABOUT COMPUTERSHARE VOUCHER SERVICES LIMITED

Computershare Voucher Services Limited (CVS) is the UK's largest dedicated childcare voucher provider responsible for the administration, management and development of childcare vouchers, an employee benefit available to all eligible working parents.

Founded in 1998, CVS has vast experience of the childcare vouchers industry, reinforced by significant technology enhancements which benefit its diverse customer base, spanning every sector, from some of the UK's largest corporations to SMEs. CVS currently works with over 100,000 working parents, more than 12,000 organisations and over 45,000 carers each month.

CVS is also a founder member of the Childcare Voucher Providers Association (CVPA), the industry body launched in March 2011 to represent childcare voucher providers and promote best practice within the sector.

For more information visit: www.computersharevoucherservices.com