

Social Impact Report



November 2017

Foreword

I am proud to present Employers For Childcare's second Social Impact Report, reflecting our continued investment in supporting working families, celebrating family friendly employers, and promoting social and economic development across the UK. The report outlines the difference our services make and how, as a result, working families are better off.

2017 has been a year of political uncertainty and upheaval. It has also been a year of change in financial support for childcare—with the introduction of Tax-Free Childcare, changes to the Tax Credit system, roll out of Universal Credit and, looking ahead, the potential closure of Childcare Vouchers to new entrants.

Through our charity we have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of these changes, lobbied for the support that is needed, and conducted research to guarantee that our work is grounded in robust evidence with the voices of parents to the forefront.

Since 2008, we have invested over £5.2 million into our charity, supporting and advocating for working families across the UK.

This investment has come from our Social Enterprise, Employers For Childcare Vouchers—the only Social Enterprise Childcare Voucher company in the UK.

This report details the activities Employers For Childcare has undertaken to make it easier for parents with dependent children to get into work and to stay in work.

The numbers show a clear expansion—exceeding even our own ambitious targets—in terms of parents and employers using our Childcare Vouchers, employers putting family friendly policies at the heart of their business, and parents accessing support from our Family Benefits Advice Service.

This year, we took the considered decision to close two of our social enterprises, Employers For Childcare Solutions and Employers For Childcare Training. These enterprises offered training, temporary childcare staff to childcare providers, and employment opportunities for those interested in a career in childcare. This was a difficult decision but, despite a high demand from childcare providers, a lack of carers meant that it was not possible to sustain the services.

Their closure enables us to invest further in other parts of the organisation and continue to offer services such as recruitment support, Access NI checks and Nanny Payroll, as well as extend the work of the charity.

Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans to continue to deliver real impact and make a positive difference to parents, employers, childcare providers and others with whom we work.

We welcome your thoughts on how we can continue to improve the work that we do and on how we report our impact.

We are conscious that there is always more to be done. In 2018, we are concerned that many more parents will be in need of support. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies forecasts that—under current plans for changes to benefits—there will be a rise in absolute child poverty in the UK, from 27% to 31% by 2021. This is shameful in today's society and I commit that Employers For Childcare will strive to ensure that parents across the UK are better off as a result of our work.

Undaunted and determined as we look to the year ahead, I commend this report to you and thank everyone who has supported our work over the last year.

Marie Marin
Chief Executive

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Through our work, we have secured direct savings for parents, identifying support they are entitled to.

This has indirectly saved the economy as a whole by supporting those who are out of work back into the workforce.



For every **£1** invested in our charity, we identified a direct saving for parents of almost **£17**



In 2016/17, we invested **£880,095** in our charity through our social enterprise activities.

In 2016/17, callers who received a calculation collectively saved over

£14.8 million



10,400+

people
helped



6,500

calculations
completed



473

outreach
sessions



2

research
reports
published



15+

meetings with
MPs & MLAs



20+

factsheets,
reports &
seminars

Callers to our Family Benefits Advice Service who received a calculation collectively saved over **£14,800,000**.

Additionally, we have identified that approximately 10% of those for whom we complete a calculation have the confidence to look for work as a result.

Based on figures produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, there is an annual average increased economic output of £13,000 every time an out-of-work benefit claimant moves into work. If the 10% of callers do move into work as a result of a calculation from our team, this means that we will have contributed to **£8,450,000** in increased economic output across the UK.

We are proud that, as a result of this impact, **Employers For Childcare has been shortlisted as a finalist for Social Enterprise of the Year at the Social Enterprise UK Awards** taking place in London in November 2017.

Marie Marin, our Chief Executive, is a finalist in the Women in Social Enterprise Category and was also placed on the first NatWest WISE 100 list, putting a spotlight on the 100 most influential women in social enterprise from across the UK.



Who, what and where...

Who are we?

Employers For Childcare aims to make it easier for parents with dependent children to get into work and to stay in work. The organisation encompasses a charity and the only Social Enterprise Childcare Voucher company in the UK.

We help parents maximise their incomes, manage childcare costs and create a suitable work-life balance. Through working with employers and policy makers, we have sought to encourage and secure better support for families in the workplace and in public policy.



Employers For Childcare Vouchers is a Social Enterprise, meaning that 100% of the profit made from this company is donated to our charitable services.

Since 2004 we have been working with employers across the UK to offer the Childcare Voucher scheme to help parents save money on the cost of registered childcare.

Who do we help?

Parents: we offer a free Family Benefits Advice Service, research the experiences of parents and lobby on their behalf, and administer a Childcare Voucher scheme.

We also have a range of guidance, factsheets, calculators and reports on our website to offer a comprehensive source of information.

Childcare providers: we provide efficient administration of the Childcare Voucher scheme, transferring payments to thousands of childcare providers every day.

We also schedule relevant seminars, disseminate information, and invite childcare providers to participate in research so that we can better understand their needs and lobby on their behalf.

Employers: over 2,500 employers across the UK use Employers For Childcare to administer their Childcare Vouchers scheme. We also support employers in their efforts to be more 'family friendly' through an annual workshop, and recognise and celebrate those that embrace family friendly policies at our annual awards ceremony.

Employers also benefit from expert advice and guidance delivered through our Family Benefits Advice Service, targeted seminars and regular e-newsletters.

Economy: we address childcare as an economic and labour market issue as well as highlighting the social and educational benefits for children.

Affordable and accessible childcare is essential in supporting parents to access and stay in work, and helps to ensure that work is financially beneficial for families, supporting economic growth and development across the UK.

What do we do?

Family Benefits Advice Service: our specialist Advisors carry out personalised benefits checks and better-off calculations to ensure that every parent is claiming all the financial help they are entitled to, particularly towards the cost of childcare.

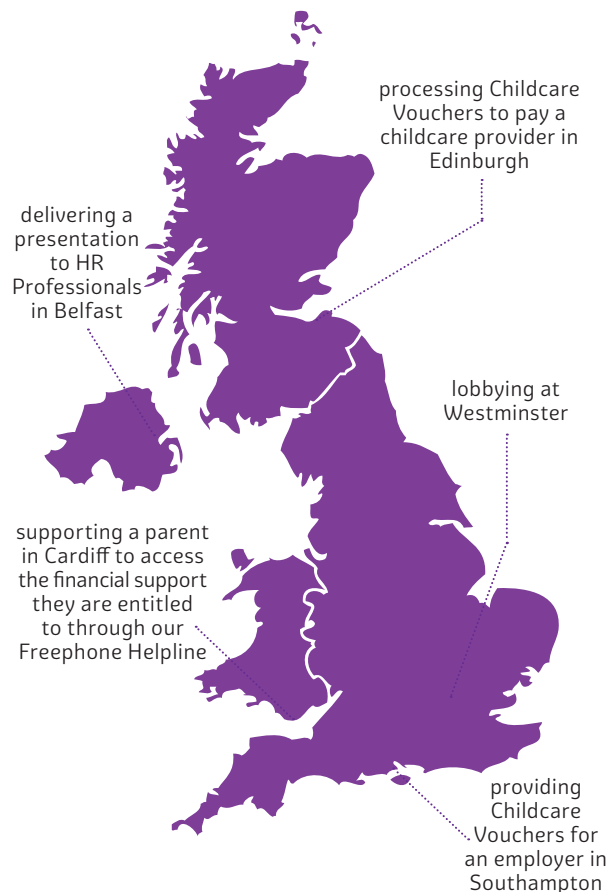
We also deal with queries on childcare and work-related issues through a Freephone Helpline used by thousands of parents, employers and others across the UK, and deliver face-to-face events, presentations, seminars, and publish information.

Research, Policy and Lobbying: we undertake research to provide us with the evidence to lobby Government on childcare, family and work-related issues, striving to ensure that the voices of parents, childcare providers and employers are heard when policy decisions are being made.

We engage with policy makers and political representatives across the UK, from the Northern Ireland Assembly to Westminster.

Where do we operate?

Employers For Childcare operates across the UK, with just a few examples—out of thousands—highlighted below:



**We
operate
across
the UK**



Social Enterprise

Since 2008, we
have invested over
£5.2 million
into helping
working families
across
the UK

In order to fund our charitable services we operate the only Social Enterprise Childcare Voucher company in the UK, Employers For Childcare Vouchers. 100% of the profit made through this business is invested in our charity.

In 2004 we set up Employers For Childcare Vouchers. At that time very few employers were offering the Childcare Voucher Scheme to staff, meaning that a limited number of parents could make savings on their childcare bill.

The Childcare Voucher Scheme is a tax and National Insurance exemption scheme. It is offered as an employee benefit.

Employers For Childcare administers the scheme for employers, across a range of

sectors, and of all shapes and sizes.

Employees using the scheme can save up to £933 per year and employers also save on Employer's National Insurance Contributions.

Last year, we also supported families and registered childcare providers with their recruitment and selection needs, including delivering 9 HR and recruitment packages, supporting 8 families using Nanny Payroll, and completing 155 Access NI checks.

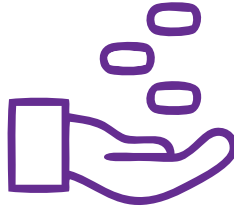
13,669 parents used our Childcare Vouchers (average across the year).

- This is an increase of **7%** on the previous year.
- Collectively, parents saved **£10.5 million**.

2,589 employers offered the Childcare Voucher Scheme to their staff as an employee benefit.

- This is an increase of **38%** on the previous year.
- Collectively, employers saved **£4.5 million**.

2016/17 Savings



In total our Childcare Voucher Scheme delivered savings of **£15 million** for working parents and employers across the UK.

What is the impact?

For every member of staff that an employer signs up to use Employers For Childcare's Childcare Vouchers, as well as generating a saving to themselves and their staff, the employer is also supporting the work of the Family Benefits Advice Service helping them to deliver free, impartial and confidential advice to families across the UK.

In 2016/17:



1

new employee signed up to use Employers For Childcare Vouchers

enabled us to provide



17

telephone calls with parents

or



2

outreach sessions

Buy Social

We took part in the 2017 Social Enterprise UK **Buy Social Campaign** encouraging organisations to use social enterprise suppliers where possible.

Buying social is about using your money—as an individual or an organisation—to create a positive impact on the world we live in. When you buy from a social enterprise you are choosing to spend your money with a business that is giving something back, reinvesting their profits to address pressing issues, from homelessness and unemployment to ethical trade and climate change.





Family Benefits Advice Service

Our Charity works directly **with parents through the Family Benefits Advice Service, and **for** parents through our research, policy and lobbying work.**

In 2016/17 Employers For Childcare continued to provide a Freephone helpline and information service to parents, employers and others advising on childcare and the financial support available to assist parents to access and stay in work. Our advisors have spoken to thousands of people, delivering free, impartial, confidential advice and information on:

- Childcare Vouchers
- Tax-Free Childcare
- Tax Credits
- Universal Credit
- Social Security Benefits
- Free School meals
- School uniform allowance
- Maternity/Paternity/Shared Parental Leave and Pay
- Flexible working
- Finding childcare in your area.

Outreach Work

Our team of expert Family Benefits Advisors carried out hundreds of roadshows, going out to locations such as employers' canteens and community venues delivering presentations and sitting down one-to-one with parents to complete personalised calculations. Each calculation represents a family that is 'better off' both financially and in terms of overall family well-being, alleviating stresses associated with significant childcare costs.



The team has also maintained a suite of factsheets, available on our website, providing advice and guidance on childcare and work-related issues.

This year has seen a number of key changes impacting on parents. April 2017 saw changes to Tax Credits, impacting heavily on many families, as well as the introduction of Tax-Free Childcare – a new form of financial support for families – and Universal Credit continues to roll out across the UK. Our team has worked tirelessly to advise parents, employers and others of these changes including holding a Tax-Free Childcare seminar, producing the Big Changes, Big Choices guide, and providing updates through our website and on social media.

Looking forward, the team will be engaging with new audiences, for example payroll professionals, and seeking to innovate in how we reach beneficiaries to ensure that we are communicating with them in ways that meet their needs.



...would recommend our services to others



...rate the quality of the services as excellent or good



We also provide **Benefit Entitlement Checks** tailored to your own family circumstances

What we did & who we helped



10,406
people helped
up 57% on last year



6,542
calculations carried out
up 61% on last year



473
outreach sessions
up 59% on last year

48% of all calculations were for a personal benefits check:

- Clients asking for a personal benefits check **gained an average of £4,084.**
- Working parents who received a personal benefits check **gained an average of £4,130.**

44% of calculations helped parents calculate savings towards registered childcare costs:

- **31%** would be better off using Tax-Free Childcare.
- **69%** were better off using Childcare Vouchers, Tax Credits, or a combination of both.



10% of calculations helped clients determine the best form of childcare support available at that time (Childcare Vouchers or Tax Credits):

- **63%** were better off using the Childcare Voucher Scheme.
- On average, clients **gained £4,577** in childcare support.
- Collectively, **we saved these parents £2,897,364** towards the cost of childcare.



99% of parents stated that speaking to our advisors helped them make decisions about their circumstances including seeking to secure work and increasing their working hours.



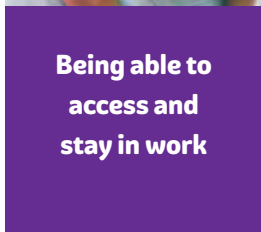
Outcomes for parents and their families



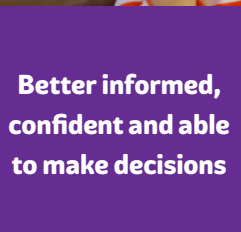
Parents have more choices open to them



Children access developmental benefits of childcare



Being able to access and stay in work



Better informed, confident and able to make decisions



Improved overall family well-being



Enhanced financial well-being



Research

Each year Employers For Childcare carries out research providing up-to-date information on the issues which impact on parents. This provides us with a **robust evidence base to lobby government on childcare, family and work related issues – all on behalf of working parents, employers and childcare providers.**

How do we use our research?

Our research provides a more powerful voice for those we represent by capturing the challenges and issues they face. This enables us to lobby strategically and to raise awareness of their needs. It also helps to inform the work that we do, identifying guidance needs, or better targeting support.

Last year our research highlighted that many parents were unaware of a new scheme to help parents with the cost of childcare, Tax-Free Childcare. We decided to:

- launch a Big Changes, Big Choices guide explaining the new scheme and how it differs from others
- raise awareness, securing slots on radio and television and holding information sessions
- contact employers to explain the different options to their staff.

This year, our research is still being finalised but awareness of Tax-Free Childcare has increased from 31% to over 80%. While understanding varies, this is a significant improvement.

What is the impact?

Our Childcare Costs Surveys are often used and referenced as reliable and valuable resources, informing political debates, policy development and service delivery.

Through our research, we are able to lobby for the childcare infrastructure and support that we know parents and other stakeholders need. Each of our consultation responses are informed by this work. It enables us to put the voices of parents and others at the heart of what we are doing and, by combining these voices, add to their power. Responding to this year's Childcare Costs Survey a number of parents shared their appreciation of this:

"Thanks for listening!"

"Thank you for requesting our feedback. It is pleasing to hear that our thoughts are being considered."

"Thank you Employers For Childcare for the information you supply to working families."

Our Research:

Northern Ireland Childcare Cost Survey

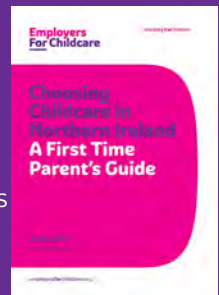
In 2017 we opened the eighth in this annual series of research exploring the cost of childcare and how this impacts on parents. We also used our research this year to explore the issues and challenges experienced by childcare providers. We will be launching the findings in early 2018.



Choosing Childcare

Published in the summer of 2016, this report examines the experiences of over 1,000 parents in looking for childcare for the first time.

The report explores how parents go about finding childcare and what factors are most important to them when sourcing a setting. It presents, from a parent's perspective, what looking for childcare for the first time is like and demonstrates what policy makers, organisations and childcare providers can learn from this insight.





Using our research, we:

- engaged with policy makers and others in responding to consultations on:
 - Refocus of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: Call for Evidence (August 2016)
 - Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (December 2016)
 - Children and Young People's Strategy for Northern Ireland (February 2017)
- produced a 2017 Manifesto and sent it to MLAs and MPs from all political parties
- engaged with MLAs and MPs at Party Conferences, All Party Groups on Social Enterprise and Children and Young People, and through one-to-one meetings
- lobbied at Westminster for the extension of the Childcare Vouchers scheme, campaigning for it to remain

open to new entrants after April 2018, including promoting a petition that has attracted more than 100,000 signatures at time of writing

- met with the Low Pay Commission to provide evidence on the experiences of working parents and those who are employed within the childcare sector
- helped to establish a Childcare For All group that is working on a public awareness campaign to ensure that childcare is high on the political agenda.

We had really positive engagement with elected representatives and know that our work helps to ensure that they are better informed on the issues experienced by the people we work with in relation to childcare infrastructure and the financial support that working parents require.



Engagement

During the year, we sought to extend our engagement with stakeholders to:

- highlight our range of services to parents, employers and childcare providers
- raise awareness of the key changes that are being rolled out
- spread the word about what we do as a charity and as a social enterprise.

Media: our work with the media keeps parents, employers and others up-to-date and well informed, and enables us to advocate on behalf of parents and share their stories.

TV and radio programmes that we featured on include BBC News 24, UTV Live, BBC Radio Ulster's On Your Behalf and Radio Four's Moneybox Live. Articles in publications include Agenda NI, Business First, and NI for Kids.

Website: in October 2016 we launched a new website to provide a more streamlined and user-friendly experience for visitors.



102,000 sessions
21,000 downloads

Social Media: we use social media to share information, tie in with campaigns, as well as to network and engage with stakeholders.



1,229
followers



5,783
likes

E-newsletters: we sent bi-monthly newsletters to three groups of stakeholders—parents, employers and childcare providers—to share information on a varied range of childcare and work-related issues.



Employers For Childcare aims to make it easier for parents with dependent children to get into work and stay in work.

To help with this, our 2017 Manifesto outlines a key ask: 'Encourage the use of Family Friendly Working Policies'.

The Family Friendly Employer Awards recognise employers who go above and beyond legal requirements to implement family friendly working policies.

In 2017 we set ourselves an ambitious target to extend the Awards, seeking to grow the number of applications and increase the number of people attending.

We were delighted to reach, and significantly exceed, our targets receiving 34 applications from across the UK,

compared to 22 in 2016, and welcoming more than 170 attendees to our Awards ceremony at the Galgorm Resort and Spa.

This is a testament to the work that has been done to raise awareness and the profile of 'family friendly' as a culture and within the development of organisational policies.

It is a pleasure to commend the work of those organisations that have put the needs of their staff at the heart of their business and we look forward to engaging with more organisations in 2018 to continue this work.

The 2017 Award winners were:

- Overall Family Friendly Employer 2017**

Belfast City Council

- Public Sector**

Winner: Belfast City Council

Highly Commended: Belfast Trust

Highly Commended: Queen's University Belfast

- Large Private Sector**

Winner: Lagan Construction Group

Highly Commended: Coca-Cola HBC Northern Ireland

Highly Commended: The Keystone Group

- SME/Micro Business**

Winner: Progressive Building Society

Highly Commended: Adventures Day Nursery

Highly Commended: Legal-Island

- Charity/Social Enterprise**

Winner: MACS NI

Highly Commended: Northern Ireland Hospice

Highly Commended: Clanrye Group



The Awards Ceremony was compered by Sarah Travers and featured an inspirational keynote address from Jonathan Jenkins, CEO of London's Air Ambulance. You can see highlights in a video on our website. The Awards were kindly sponsored by Worthingtons Solicitors.

Family Friendly Employer Workshop

In March we held our annual Family Friendly Employer Workshop, bringing together HR professionals from all industries, to learn from the winners of the 2016 Awards, and share best practice advice, inspiration and practical ideas to improve employee welfare and help staff manage their work-life balance.

Attendees enjoyed the presentations from previous Award winners, a particularly memorable moment being the response from the audience to MACS NI revealing that their staff can bring their dog to work if doggy day care lets them down!

Feedback

Parents

- 97% are satisfied/very satisfied with the service provided by Employers For Childcare Vouchers.
- 95% find the e-Vouchers system easy/very easy to use.
- 99% would recommend Employers For Childcare Vouchers to a friend, colleague or employer.

"I have used Employers for Childcare for just under two years and have not had a single issue with the service provided. I find it easy to use and navigate around. When I have needed technical help the phones are always answered in a quick professional manner and the matter has been resolved very quickly. This is a great site."

"This was very beneficial advice and will make a big difference in my mental wellbeing in very difficult circumstances."

"Enabled me to take up employment straight away when offered the job. Otherwise would have had to ring Tax Credits whom can be vague on information and unhelpful."

Childcare providers

"Very clear, concise presentation from a very knowledgeable facilitator. Many thanks."

"Excellent session, information was clearly presented with realistic scenarios."

Employers

- 98% find the level of contact they receive from Employers For Childcare 'just right'.
- 96% are satisfied or very satisfied with the level of service overall.
- 97% will definitely or probably continue using Employers For Childcare as their Childcare Voucher provider.
- 95% would recommend Employers For Childcare Vouchers to another organisation.

"From first contact, through setting up the scheme, and now using the scheme, Employers For Childcare have been excellent to deal with. The system is intuitive for both employers and employees, and those using it have seen a real benefit from availing of childcare vouchers through salary sacrifice. The team are only too happy to help should we have any queries around the use of the scheme. I would thoroughly recommend using Employers For Childcare to another company exploring their options to make the workplace more supportive to working parents."

"Making the best choice with regard to benefits can result in savings of thousands of pounds for our families. In addition to financial advice, your friendly advisers also answered questions on the various childcare arrangements available for employees trying to juggle their work life balance. I would recommend this service to any employer and will welcome Employers For Childcare's Family Benefits Advice team back again next year."





Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who made our work possible over the last year, whether you are

- a parent or childcare provider who completed a survey
- a community organisation that hosted a Family Benefits Advice roadshow
- an employer who offered our Childcare Voucher scheme
- or a policy maker who listened

...thank you!

We welcome comments, feedback and reflections on this report and the work that it documents.

Please get in touch at hello@employersforchildcare.org

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