

1. What is the need and demand for Occasional Childcare.CC services?

Work related usage

Although some parents continue to use OCC for non-work-related reasons, there has been a gradual shift in demand for OCC services related to changes in working arrangements for families.

In many services, parents are using OCC to 'fill in gaps' in care arrangements, for example, for shift work, between shared parental care, other informal care arrangements or to manage home-based work commitments.

Parents using OCC tend to have less predictable patterns of work and also tend to minimise the amount of formal child care they use either for reasons of personal preference or cost.

In such circumstances, parents reported that they are unable to utilise Long Day Care or Family Day Care due to the requirement for permanent, often whole day bookings.

Parents reported choosing to use more flexible OCC services, although this often incurs relatively higher hourly costs than Long Day Care. To use Long Day Care to meet these needs would mean parents holding a permanent booking for time which they may not use, but for which they would be obliged to pay.

Non-work related usage

When used for non-work related purposes, OCC is fulfilling an important role in supporting parents to manage their family responsibilities.

In most cases use of OCC was for specific reasons, rather than simply for parents to have a break from their children.

Many parents highlighted the lack of available extended family support; the difficulty coping with the demands of small children; the need for additional support and respite for children with special needs, as well as early socialisation as key reasons for using the service. Although some centres have provided crisis or emergency care, the instances of this type of care delivered in formula-funded centres appears limited to centres in specific locations.