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**New study reveals childminders’ views of funded early education for two-year-olds and the introduction of childminder agencies**

A new study published today reveals the views of childminders on government provision for funded early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds.

NatCen Social Research interviewed 20 childminders across England who explained some of the positive potential benefits of funded early education for this group including providing access to a learning environment, preparing them for school, supporting general welfare and improving behaviour.

Childminders who offered funded early education, did so to:

* Provide continuity of care for children already in their care and their siblings.
* Meet local demand, fill vacancies and meet the needs of local families.
* Make a difference in their local area, by supporting disadvantaged families.

However, some of the childminders also described barriers to offering the provision, including:

* Lack of local demand – Some childminders said a lack of awareness and take-up from eligible families and a perception that group based child care was preferable was causing a lack of demand.
* Meeting additional needs - There were some concerns raised about the additional needs some disadvantaged children and their families might have, and the increased demands this could place on childminders.
* Accreditation, admin and ineligibility - There was a perception among some childminders that registering to offer the provision would be bureaucratic and costly and there were some misconceptions over eligibility, including the mistaken view that a Level 3 qualification was required.

Childminders also shared their views on the introduction of childminder agencies and asked for more information and reassurances on:

* The financial viability and stability of agencies, as some worried that agency fees would erode childminder income or increase costs for parents.
* How Ofsted would inspect agencies as concerns were raised that an Ofsted rating applied to the agency (rather than the individual) could risk some poor practice being hidden and exceptionally high standards going unrecognised.
* How childminders would be able to retain their independence and individuality within an agency and the extent to which they would have choice over the children they cared for.

The findings come from a qualitative study undertaken as part of the Study of Early Education and Development being carried out by NatCen Social Research, the University of Oxford, 4Children and Frontier Economics on behalf of the Department for Education.

Author of the report, Meg Callanan, Senior Researcher, NatCen Social Research said: “This project has helped us to better understand the facilitators and barriers to offering funded early education from some of the people who are expected to provide it. It provides an opportunity to make funded early education work better for childminders and disadvantaged children”

**ENDS**

**Contact**: Leigh Marshall 02075498506 or 07828031850 [leigh.marshall@natcen.ac.uk](mailto:leigh.marshall@natcen.ac.uk)

**Notes to Editors.**

The full report “Study of Early Education and Development: views and experiences of childminders is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childcare-provision-views-and-experiences-of-childminders>

At NatCen Social Research we believe that social research has the power to make life better. By really understanding the complexity of people's lives and what they think about the issues that affect them, we give the public a powerful and influential role in shaping services that can make a difference to everyone. And as an independent, not for profit organization we're able to focus our time and energy on meeting our clients' needs and delivering social research that works for society. Find out about the work we do by visiting [www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk)