

Response to DfE Consultation

Surveys on Childcare and Early Years in England, March 2018

May 2018

The GLA Economics response is only to the questions on the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents (CEYSP).

Use of the survey data

a) How do you make use of the survey data and what it influences or informs

GLA Economics published [Demand for childcare in London – drivers and projections](#) in March 2018. This made extensive use of the CEYSP particularly around use of types of childcare by child and household characteristics. It enabled comparisons between London level and national level figures.

The paper considered trends in the use of childcare which supported London-level childcare demand projections. This supports the duty on local authorities to plan for the provision of childcare in the [draft new London Plan](#). That is, without this data the Mayor of London might not have the evidence to justify his policy. Defence of it with external stakeholders would also be harder.

The data also contributed to an assessment of the affordability of childcare in London and of its implications for female labour supply. Maternal employment rates in London are lower than nationally across all ages of children.

b) What data do you make most use of

The time series of formal childcare use by age of child is the evidence underpinning the Mayoral policy in the draft London Plan which places a duty on local authorities to plan for the provision of childcare.

Other data on trends in use of types of childcare by child and household characteristics at a London and at a national level is important contextual information to monitor developments. CEYSP is the only survey which has sufficient sample sizes to monitor these developments at a London level.

c) How do you anticipate making use of the data in the future

CEYSP would continue to be a critical data source for the GLA, as it is likely to have an ongoing interest in childcare matters, and specifically monitoring childcare use.

Frequency of the survey

a) What are your views on the frequency of the survey up to 2020 and after 2020?

The GLA has an interest in early years children and therefore supports monitoring of take-up of free provision for this group. It is noteworthy that take-up of the 2 year-old offer has remained steady across London. An annual survey which tracked take-up and reasons for non-take-up of free childcare provision for early years children would be welcome. For it to be useful in London sample sizes would need to be sufficiently large to support regional level breakdowns.

It is important for the GLA to continue to monitor use of childcare for children of all ages. , GLA Economics would therefore not support discontinuance of the survey for 5-14 year olds, although data collection would not need to be annual.

Sample frame

a) How do you view the current sample frames used for the survey

GLA Economics uses the survey to provide time series analysis. Across the analysis conducted there was no apparent discontinuity in 2017 from the introduction of a new sampling frame which was encouraging.

b) How do you view the suitability and robustness of alternative sample frames such as the Postcode Address File

The main issue for GLA Economics is continuity of the series, which would argue for continuity in the sample frame unless there were good reasons to justify an alternative approach. Any approach should reflect that in London low and high income households can be in close proximity.

c) How do you view the impact any changes introduced to the sample frames would have on your use of the statistics

Monitoring of developments is important to the GLA, and so discontinuities in time series from the introduction of new sample frames would be unhelpful from a GLA Economics perspective.

Sample coverage

a) What are your views on the current sample coverage of the survey (parents of children aged 0-14) and our proposal to change the sample coverage to focus on parents of pre-school children?

The consequence of such a change is that it would not be possible to monitor childcare use in London across children of all ages. GLA would not readily have evidence to support implementation of the duty on local authorities to plan for the provision of childcare. GLA Economics would therefore not support this change.

The coverage of early years children should allow the identification of 0-4 year olds for continuity of ongoing monitoring.

b) What alternative approaches could be used for collecting data about parents of children aged 5-14 of statutory school age?

There is no other data source which provides data on childcare use by child and household characteristics for London.

c) How would any changes to sample coverage influence your use of the statistics should changes be introduced from 2019 onwards

GLA Economics would do what it can with the available data. It would seek where possible to update existing analysis, but it would be against this change because of the risks to effective implementation of GLA policy. GLA Economics would prefer the sample to be extended to support high level monitoring at local authority level.

Survey mode

a) What are your views on the current survey mode and potential alternative collection modes

It is for DfE to be responsible for the robustness of its statistics. GLA Economics would like assurance that there is no discontinuity in reported data series.

b) What are your views on conducting a mode experiment to pilot alternative collection modes

It is for DfE to be responsible for the robustness of its statistics. GLA Economics would like assurance that there is no discontinuity in reported data series.

c) What is the likely impact of any changes to the survey mode on your use of the survey statistics

It is for DfE to be responsible for the robustness of its statistics. GLA Economics would like assurance that there is no discontinuity in reported data series.

Topic coverage

a) What additional topics might the survey cover?

Analysis of the survey at a London level is limited by sample size, which is why its main value is in high-level monitoring.

b) What amends would improve the survey?

It would be extremely helpful to have some means to estimate childcare use by type of childcare at a local authority level.

There is some significant volatility in results across surveys in terms of:

- Distribution of children across ethnic groups for London and nationally¹
- Use of childcare by type of childcare and family income or working status for London²

If there was some way to resolve this that would be welcome.

c) What deletions might there be from the survey?

¹ See table 20 of [Demand for childcare in London - drivers and projections | London City Hall](#)

² See [Demand for childcare in London - drivers and projections | London City Hall](#), for example, at table 16 and use of formal care for families with income under £20,000, and at table 17 and use of formal care in couples where neither adult is working

GLA Economics has set out the range of data in the survey it has used. It would have made further use of the survey if sample sizes had been sufficiently large for other cross-tabulations to provide robust results.

Outputs and dissemination

a) What are your ideas, if any, for how we could improve the survey outputs, key products and dissemination of results?

It is extremely helpful for the underlying survey data to be available at the UK Data Service. More regional level analysis is always valuable.