

Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber (GOYH) FINAL REPORT

Research into the causes of, and mechanisms for
improving, the low take-up of the childcare element of the
working tax credit in the region



Working to provide equal chances, challenge disadvantage
and promote best practice in services for children and families

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1 Introduction

Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber (GOYH) commissioned Hempsall Consultancies to undertake research into the take-up of formal childcare by low income families. The measure of take-up of formal childcare being used is the percentage of the population claiming the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit.

1.1 Key aims

The project aims to explore why five local authorities (Rotherham, Barnsley, Wakefield, Bradford and North Lincolnshire) have a lower take-up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit than the region as a whole, and why the region has a lower take-up than average. Calderdale is being included in the project on the basis that they currently enjoy higher take-up rates and will act as comparison areas.

The project is primarily an exploration of current, recent and planned initiatives to increase the take-up of formal childcare by low income families in the five participating authorities, with consideration of any identified regional initiatives that may inform outcomes:

Outcomes:

- Collate local, regional and national data and research;
- Collate information about each local authority's approach and strategy to encourage take-up;
- Analyse findings to document practical and achievable methods for all local authorities to use, produced into a draft report;
- Produce briefing and tool-kit style materials from the research;
- Launch the materials and support local authorities to complete an action plan proforma highlighting to Government Office the actions that will be taken following this consultancy project;
- Produce a final report

1.2 Methodology

An initial meeting with participating local authorities and partners was held on 12 January 2009. The purpose of the meeting was to outline the projects aims and methodology, identify existing local and regionally held research relevant to the project and to confirm key contacts for the consultations. Discussions contributed to an initial understanding of participating local authorities and partner's strategies and approaches. Where an authority was unable to attend the initial meeting, supporting notes and information were distributed via email (Calderdale, Bradford and Wakefield).

An information proforma was developed and distributed in February 2009 to participating local authorities and partners (Jobcentre Plus). The proforma requested information on, and evidence of outcomes for, recent, current and planned initiatives to increase the take-up of formal childcare by low income families around a small number of themes:

- Strategies or initiatives that have been used to increase the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months (including any planned);
- Specific action around the Ofsted Voluntary Childcare Register and Extended Schools provision;
- The provision of information about childcare take-up and/or tax credits;
- Information held regarding current take-up rates;
- Outreach work with low income families;
- Monitoring systems;
- Media campaigns and marketing drives.

To further inform the project, consideration was given at the Childcare Regional Network (10 March 2009) to work being undertaken by local authorities to increase the take-up of formal childcare. Local authority representatives completed a pro-forma based on seven identified themes for increasing the take-up of formal childcare emerging from initial work with the five authorities and partners participating in the project.

Desk research has been undertaken drawing upon published research and data to establish a regional and national context for the project and to inform the development of potential strategies to promote and increase the take-up of formal childcare amongst low income families.

Work from each of these strands has been brought together in this first draft report to provide an overview of findings and recommendations.

2 The policy context

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (2007) central Government introduced a single set of 198 national indicators that would be the only measures on which central Government will performance manage outcomes delivered by local government working alone or in partnership¹. The national indicators measure success in local delivery of the central Government's priority outcomes expressed through the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review, or Department's Strategic Objectives (DSOs).

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) demonstrate how local strategic partnerships will deliver measurable improvements to where people live. Local Area Agreements are structured around four policy areas or indicative themes:

- Children and young people;
- Safer and stronger communities;
- Healthier communities and older people;
- Economic development and environment

Local authorities will have chosen up to 35 national indicators as 'designated targets' for improvement when developing their Local Area Agreements. 'Take-up of formal childcare by low income working families' is a national performance indicator (NI 118) and as such may form part of a local authority's Local Area Agreement.

NI 118 has not been elected as a designated target by any Yorkshire & Humber local authority, however increasing the take-up of formal childcare by low income families is linked to a number of national and regional targets.

¹ National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships, Communities and Local Government
www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/nationalindicators/

NI 118 is one of a set of five indicators related to the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) target to maximise employment opportunity for all². It is linked to PSA 11 (to narrow the gap in educational achievement between low income families and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers) and is a key driver for PSA 9 (to halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-2011, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020)³. NI 118 is also relevant to Childcare Sufficiency and the requirement on local authorities to assess the provision of childcare to meet the needs of working parents and those undertaking training that will support employment, including an assessment of affordability and groups of parents with the greatest affordability problems.

2.1 The rationale and definition of NI 118

The rationale and definition for NI 118 is incorporated into Annex 2 'Children and Young People - National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions' (HM Government April 2008) under the economic well-being outcome, which states:

2.1.1 Rationale:

“Driving take-up of formal childcare by low income families brings benefits to children’s learning and development. Formal childcare has positive benefits for children in terms of their social and emotional development as well as giving young children a head start in life and is a key indicator in closing the gap in attainment between children from low income families and their more affluent peers. Research from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project shows there is a strong body of evidence that indicates that good quality childcare and pre-school provision, especially from age 2 upwards, has positive benefits on children’s all round development and that these benefits last through primary school to age 10/11. For older children,

² Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA)
www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=8496128

³ National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions, Annex 2: Children and Young People, HM Government
www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/735125.pdf

research has shown that the benefits of participation in out of school hours activities are considerable, regardless of the activity undertaken. It shows that young people who participate in activities do better than would have been expected from baseline measures in academic attainment. In addition, participants often show an improvement in their behaviour and attendance in school, and increased confidence and self-esteem. This indicator is linked to PSA 11 (narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers) but is also a key driver for PSA 9 (halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-2011, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020). Provision for childcare is a key enabler to work and contributes to successful entry into the labour market and sustained employment opportunities". (Pp 176)

2.1.2 Definition and measure

Take up of formal childcare is defined as the number of families who benefit from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, as a percentage of the number of working families receiving more than the family element of Child Tax Credit.

Take up of formal childcare by low income working families is measured by take up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The Guidance states that:

"The childcare element of Working Tax Credit (WTC) is part of the wider tax credit system and is dependent on families being eligible for claiming both Child Tax Credit (CTC) at more than the family element and being in work. The take up of both of these elements is crucial for low income families to claim as part of the package of support to lift families and children out of poverty.

Childcare costs can be a financial burden for families on low income and especially for those families who may be moving from benefit into work. The childcare element is income dependent and for those on the

lowest incomes 80% of eligible childcare costs can be claimed each week up to a maximum claim of £140 for one child and £240 for two or more children.

Success will be an increase in the numbers benefiting from the childcare element of WTC. Such an increase and an upward trajectory of the childcare element figures will demonstrate that childcare is flexible and affordable for parents and will also ensure that the children from low income/poor families are not deprived of the early education and/or the Extended Schools/formal childcare provision that is enjoyed by more affluent peers and which has a positive impact on outcomes and attainment” (Pp 176-177)

2.2 Take-up data and performance

The Parent Childcare Survey 2005 found that take-up of formal childcare by low income families is lower than for higher income families (46% of families in the least deprived quintile used formal childcare compared to 36% in the most deprived quintile). 77% of 3 and 4 year had used early education provision in the past week (2004-2005) compared to 88% (in the general population). Take-up was considerably lower amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, and some Black groups.

Data regarding the number of families receiving the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is released once a year by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in May. Baseline data is from 2005-2006. The release in May 2009 will relate to the period 2007-2008. The latest confirmed figures are for 2006-2007; data relating to later periods is provisional and should therefore be treated as such.

Where a local authority is at or above the national average figure, good performance will mirror the average percentage increase in numbers benefiting each year.

For local authorities that are currently below the national average, good performance will show them reaching the national average within two years and then maintaining an upward trajectory. (Reference: Pp 179-180⁴)

2.3 Low income

The most commonly used threshold of low income is a household income that is 60% or less than the average British household income. Based on 2006/2007 data, the 60% threshold was worth £189 a week for a single adult with 2 dependent children under 14 years and £270 a week for a couple with two dependent children aged under 14 years. Sums are measured after income tax, council tax and housing costs have been deducted. In 2006/2007 13 million people (22% of the population) were living in households below this income threshold⁵.

⁴ National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions, Annex 2: Children and Young People, HM Government

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/735125.pdf

⁵ www.poverty.gov.uk

3 Take- up of the childcare element of the working tax credit in Yorkshire and The Humber

3.1 Take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit 2004 - 2007

Take-up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit increased year on year in all Yorkshire & Humber local authority areas. Of the fifteen local authorities, nine have a take-up rate below that found in England as a whole. Amongst the six local authorities directly participating in this research, five have take-up rates that are significantly below the national average (Barnsley, Bradford, North Lincolnshire, Rotherham and Wakefield). With the exception of Bradford, these authorities have increased take-up year on year (2006/7 over 2005/6) in line with the national average increase in take-up of 1%.

Calderdale, included as a comparison area in this project, enjoys significantly higher levels of take-up than its neighbouring authorities and the national (England) average. Take-up in Calderdale has also increased beyond the national increase 2006/7 over 2005/6. Note: data presented in the following tables has been updated to reflect HMRC data released July 2009:

Take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit 2004 - 2007

	Childcare element ratio in 2004- 2005 (%)	Childcare element ratio in 2005- 2006 (%)	Childcare element ratio in 2006- 2007 (%)	Difference 2006/07 over 2005/06
England	14.48%	15.85%	16.95%	1.1%
Barnsley	9.95%	11.71%	13.42%	1.71%
Bradford	12.91%	13.83%	14.02%	0.19%
Calderdale	19.17%	20.27%	21.73%	1.46%
Doncaster	11.38%	13.23%	15.01%	1.78%
East Riding of Yorkshire UA	15.27%	16.57%	18.11%	1.54%
Kingston upon Hull, City of UA	12.04%	13.51%	14.48%	0.97%
Kirklees	14.77%	16.05%	17.11%	1.06%
Leeds	17.03%	18.58%	19.99%	1.41%
North East Lincolnshire UA	10.98%	13.27%	14.32%	1.05%
North Lincolnshire UA	11.58%	12.73%	14.02%	1.29%
North Yorkshire	16.48%	18.71%	19.54%	0.83%
Rotherham	9.66%	10.40%	11.62%	1.22%
Sheffield	13.23%	14.58%	15.92%	1.34%
Wakefield	10.24%	11.63%	13.10%	1.47%
York UA	17.35%	19.07%	20.54%	1.47%

Source: Take-up of the childcare element of WTC July 200 (2009), DWP

Across Yorkshire & Humber in 2006-2007 37,000 families benefited from the childcare element with an average weekly value of £54.20 which totals £2m⁶. In 2007-2008, this increased to 39,000 families benefiting from the childcare

⁶ Child and Working Tax Credits Statistics, finalised annual awards 2006-7, geographical analyses HMRC 2008

element of WTC with an average weekly value of £57.88, equating to £2.26m across the region⁷

3.2 Finalised awards 2007/8 by local authority and government region

Take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit was released by HMRC in July 2009. This latest data is presented below and shows the childcare element ratio for 2005/2006 and 2007/2008:

Data shows that there has been a higher increase in the region compared to England as a whole (+0.97% compared to +0.81%). All local authorities in the region have shown an increase in the percentage of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

Data is shown in the following table:

⁷ Child and Working Tax Credits Statistics, finalised annual awards 2007-8, geographical analyses HMRC 2009

Take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit 2006 - 2008

	Childcare element ratio 2006/07	Childcare element ratio 2007/08	Difference 2007/08 over 2006/07
England	16.95%	17.76%	0.81%
GONE	16.34%	17.31%	0.97%
Barnsley	13.42%	15.07%	1.65%
Bradford	14.02%	14.41%	0.39%
Calderdale	21.73%	23.04%	1.31%
Doncaster	15.01%	16.12%	1.89%
East Riding of Yorkshire	18.11%	19.38%	1.27%
Kingston upon Hull, City of	14.48%	15.61%	1.13%
Kirklees	17.11%	18.14%	1.03%
Leeds	19.99%	20.66%	0.67%
North East Lincolnshire	14.32%	15.23%	0.91%
North Lincolnshire	14.02%	14.94%	0.92%
North Yorkshire	19.54%	20.76%	1.22%
Rotherham	11.62%	13.21%	1.59%
Sheffield	15.92%	16.56%	0.64%
Wakefield	13.10%	14.29%	1.19%
York	20.54%	21.31%	0.77%

Source: Child and Working Tax Credits Statistics Finalised Annual Awards 2007/08, HMRC July 2009

4 A framework for increasing the take-up of formal childcare with low income families

The areas identified in the following framework represent key elements of a coordinated strategy that could be used by a local authority to plan, instigate and measure the increase of take-up of formal childcare by low income working families.

4.1 Strategy, leadership and planning

The take-up of formal childcare, particularly for low income families is central to many key local authority and central government objectives, notably: PSA 11 to narrow the gap in educational achievement between low income families and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers; PSA 9 to halve the number of children living in poverty by 2011 on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020; NI 118 is one of a set of five indicators related to the DWP target to maximise employment opportunity for all; and is highly relevant to the childcare sufficiency duty in meeting the childcare needs of families to support their work and work-related activities.

- Childcare take-up should be formally recognised and incorporated at a strategic level e.g. within the local authority' childcare sufficiency action plan, the Children and Young People's Plan, and at Children's Trust level regardless of the status of NI 118 in local area agreements
- Whilst the FIS and Jobcentre Plus have pivotal roles in delivering targeted and responsive actions that contribute to the objective, leadership is required in each local authority to ensure that actions are strategically placed. This will support internal and external partners to dedicate appropriate capacity and resource to achieve stated aims across: economic development; regeneration; training agencies; voluntary sector community projects; children's centres; extended schools; early years and childcare providers; Citizens' Advice Bureau (and other information, advice and guidance services); and other local partners.

- Strategic and operational partners could be brought together to map their contributions and to develop and agree a shared vision to inform action planning and to establish regular measurement and review processes.

4.2 Operational issues

To achieve the strategic objectives planning needs to identify clear and measurable operational delivery. All stakeholders need to be clear about their individual roles and how they relate to the roles of others. Everyone should be allocated measurable responsibilities with accountability for inputs, outputs and outcomes. All work should be delivered under the shared vision and aims. To enable this to happen, time could be allocated to train, support and challenge stakeholders. Leadership should take a coordinating role to monitor performance of the plan and ensure a seamless support service throughout parents' journey into work and using formal childcare.

- To fulfill their role, delivery partners may require away day and regular meetings to share roles, explain work priorities and objectives and develop effective working relationships
- Standardised resources could be developed to include local tool-kits, packs and guidance to provide supporting information for contacts, effective referrals and to achieve a seamless journey into work
- Progress on delivering the action plan could be brought to review meetings each quarter
- Include early years and childcare settings in operational delivery by providing support and training to promote childcare take-up, information provision and tax credit and other financial support for parents. This also aims to support the sustainability of childcare settings
- Ensure that all types of settings for children of all ages are included in operational delivery, recognising that children's centres have target age ranges that are not representative of all children and families

4.3 Promotion, advertising and awareness of childcare options and financial support

The childcare sufficiency assessment is a useful starting point for assessing barriers and support needs for increasing the take-up of formal childcare. More targeted work may also be required in particular geographical areas or amongst particular populations. This research will inform the need for delivering the right message, to the right person and the right time. There is a strong need for clear messages on childcare provision (including supply and range, use of childcare, meeting individual needs, the free flexible entitlement, extended schools, and children's centres); along with information about support to pay for childcare (childcare element of Working Tax Credits, childcare vouchers, help for students, and other local support). Additionally, the different benefits of accessing childcare need to be identified promoted and communicated e.g. educational achievement, child development, and economic well-being.

- Annually update the childcare sufficiency assessment
- Adopt a campaign style approach to marketing and promotion of take-up and build in review and measurement of impact and use opportunities to track parents through the journey into work
- Promote the supply, range and type of childcare provision and how parents can find and use such provision
- Provide clear initial information on the range of financial support available and easy routes to finding out more from a choice of sources (including where to go for application support)
- Roll-out the use of the DCSF/HMRC tax credit ready reckoner across children's centres, FIS, early years and childcare settings and other information sources and offer support and training to ensure its effective and appropriate use
- Promote multiple messages on the benefits of childcare to the target audience
- Use appropriate communication methods above and beyond standard tools e.g. leaflets and posters, through outreach and brokerage work, DVD, community projects, information providers, delivery partners etc.

- Support employers to use the ready reckoner, access childcare information and disseminate childcare and tax credit information to their workforce and potential workforce

Bradford provides one example of how a local authority, working with and through partners, has planned and executed a comprehensive marketing strategy.

4.4 Monitoring impact

There are examples of where local authorities have planned to monitor the impact of initiatives, for example with the plans to survey parent/carers via schools at set periods in Bradford or the take-up of childcare taster sessions and impact of strategies introduced in Rotherham, but impact monitoring is not universal. The key data set provided by HMRC/DWP is not consistently disseminated, accessed nor understood.

Local data collection could support the measurement of counter-strategies that may also increase the take-up of formal childcare e.g. free flexible entitlement and increased use of childcare vouchers. This is important as they contribute to the achievement of NI 118 whilst not directly impacting on tax credit take-up levels.

- Use HMRC/DWP data provided in May of each year and snapshot data provided throughout the year at local authority and super output area levels to monitor impact and inform targeting
- Local monitoring and measurement needs to be built into all projects at the outset (establish baselines to enable the measurement of progress and impact)
- The impact of the roll out of new initiatives such as the free flexible entitlement and two year old funding etc. need to be included in analysis of progress to increase the take-up of formal childcare, so that tax credit take-up is not the only measure at a local level

- Annual updates and the full three year review of the childcare sufficiency assessment provide an opportunity to monitor annual progress on take-up of tax credit and other childcare take-up strategies

4.5 The role of FIS

The role of the FIS is pivotal but not exclusive in this area. There are essential roles that the FIS needs to deliver, one of which is equipping other partners (including community information providers, early years and childcare settings and other local authority teams) to provide general information and awareness raising activities.

Where FISs are already experiencing capacity and resource challenges, it requires the local authority to review delivery in line with section 12 of the Childcare Act (2006) to achieve the information duty. In addition, the FIS needs to act as a hub, with effective outreach and brokerage linked and co-delivered with external partners. FIS is in a unique position to routinely collect data on supply and demand from providers, and demand and need from individual parents and families. As a central information point, the FIS needs to put in place processes to measure and track levels of enquiries and outcomes generated from marketing campaigns, referrals and other strategy activities. This also requires a close relationship with the on-going childcare sufficiency assessment process.

- The FIS should have a central role in promotion, advertising and awareness campaigns as a point of contact and referral
- The Childcare Act (2006) Section 12 information duty provides a structure for the provision of the FIS
- Outreach work is important as part of a coordinated strategy for reaching communities most often excluded and providing targeted awareness raising in identified locations. This may involve working with voluntary and community groups and key partners
- The FIS' brokerage role is key to matching childcare supply to parental need, in this role there is a great deal of potential to collect and analyse informative data for strategy and policy

- The FIS should arguably take the lead in ensuring that the tax credit ready reckoner is appropriately and effectively utilised in the field by the FIS and partners and that routes to application support are clear

4.6 The role of Jobcentre Plus

As with the FIS, Jobcentre Plus holds a central role in information, advice and guidance – with a discrete focus on parents’ journey into work. Childcare barriers to work are a consideration of Jobcentre Plus within the process of supporting parents into work. Removing these barriers benefits from access to up-to-date information about childcare supply and ready access to working with FIS to achieve effective brokerage support where needed. Jobcentre Plus should also inform the childcare sufficiency assessment.

A key role is the provision of individual advice and information for parents including ‘better off calculations’, fast track tax credit applications and effectively referring parents to the FIS and additional support such as childcare taster sessions.

- Jobcentre Plus should be included in strategic and operational planning
- Outreach working requires action over and above changing location of work and should include proactive reach strategies, targeting where needed and generating significant new case loads, relationships and awareness
- Jobcentre Plus role and contribution to marketing and campaign based projects should be clearly specified
- There should be regular sharing of data to monitor impact of strategies and to inform the childcare sufficiency assessment and duty

4.7 Pilot programmes and test projects

There is much to learn from projects developed and delivered across the region, from other regions and nationally. The DCSF is also working with some local authorities on NI 118 test programmes. These approaches offer opportunities to inform and shape new local projects or revise existing

programmes. Of crucial importance is that outcome measurement is included in pilot and test projects from the outset.

- Consider the different approaches that provide case studies within this report
- Work with other local authorities to consider their strategies and use this information to inform your own plans
- Dedicate funding to resource pilot and test programmes and carefully monitor success and outcomes prior to inform decisions to roll-out across your local authority area

Take benefit from the learning of the DCSF NI 118 test programme local authorities (as outlined in section seven)

5 Strategies and work to support the take-up of formal childcare and/or the childcare element of Working Tax Credit in Yorkshire & Humber

5.1 Introduction to findings

This section of the report describes some of the strategies and work found in Yorkshire & Humber relating to the increase of take-up of formal childcare in low income families.

Local authorities and their partners were asked to describe and where possible provide evidence of their work against the following structure:

- Overall strategies or initiatives that have been/are used to increase the take-up of formal childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Families Tax Credit over the past 24 months (including any actions planned);
- Specific action around the Ofsted Voluntary Childcare Register and Extended Schools provision;
- The provision of information about childcare, childcare take-up, tax credits including who is involved in the dissemination of information
- The process of keeping all relevant stakeholders and partners up to date with information and how partners/stakeholders are supported to signpost parent/carers. How referrals are tracked and monitored;
- How information is held regarding current take-up rates, population as a whole and low income families in particular;
- Outcomes of any recent (past 12-18 months) consultations with parents/carers and professional partners that provide insight into barriers and drivers for formal childcare take-up;
- Detail of any outreach/development work with low income families, frequently excluded families;
- Examples of how data is routinely collected that may support monitoring of take-up and systems in place to monitor this data
- Local media campaigns and marketing drives and how these are linked to national campaigns

Local authority area summaries are shown in section 8. Pro-forma returns are available as an appendix to this report.

Information received from participating local authorities and Jobcentre Plus Childcare Partnership Managers identified a range of activities to support the take-up of formal childcare and access to support for childcare. There are examples of proactive, coordinated and multi-agency work and detailed marketing and promotion campaigns. Initiatives and strategies involve partners (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau and employer representatives), childcare providers and extended services. The principle agent in promoting and supporting the take-up of formal childcare are the Children's/Family Information Services, who are identified by local authorities as playing a pivotal role. Activities of Jobcentre Plus support the FIS work and there are clear examples of effective joint work which targets the take-up of formal childcare and/or the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (albeit that one local authority identified a need for closer working relationships/information sharing with Jobcentre Plus).

Calderdale, acting as a comparison area, does not appear to be planning or delivering strategies that are substantially different from the other five (lower performing) local authorities. Indeed, there are examples of work in other areas (notably Wakefield and Bradford) that appear to be more coordinated and targeted. A key issue is the availability of current and accessible data that would enable local authorities to measure the impact of their initiatives. HMRC snapshot data which is much more current than verified annual data may be useful in tracking the impact of initiatives but may not be sufficient. There are examples from participating local authorities of impact monitoring being planned as part of a strategy or initiative discussed in the following section.

5.2 Targeting work and measuring impact

It has been difficult to identify any quantifiable outcomes arising from the range of initiatives and strategies executed by participating local authorities

and partners. There are a number of new initiatives however that may yield useful data to inform an assessment of impact in time. For example:

- A comprehensive marketing strategy being undertaken by **Bradford** and how it impacts on enquiries to the FIS and other key partners. One identified method is a planned survey of parent/carers via schools to ascertain levels of awareness and take-up of the childcare element of WTC and childcare vouchers, repeated periodically to track changes;
- Outcomes of **Jobcentre Plus** outreach work in terms of tracking referrals and take-up (not currently planned but may be of value);
- Outcomes of outreach work in employer premises in **Rotherham**;
- Tracking outcomes of childcare taster sessions in terms of future impact on the take-up of formal childcare;
- Formal marketing training offered to childcare providers in **Wakefield**;

Impact monitoring is not however routinely built into initiatives and strategies at the planning stage. Jobcentre Plus routinely monitors outcomes of childcare discussions (a statutory duty introduced between clients and lone parent advisors) and referrals to the C/FIS. However, information provided by local authorities and Jobcentre Plus does not always make clear the extent to which robust data is shared and how referrals may be tracked.

Data regarding take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is available, released in May of the following year (data for 2007/08 will be available in May 2009). Snapshot data is available but findings suggest that this is not regularly accessed to inform impact monitoring by all local authorities (or partners).

Free early education entitlement is not taken into account in the measure adopted for the take-up of formal childcare but may be a central strand in each local authority's strategy. Similarly, the promotion and take-up of childcare vouchers (a central plank of a number of local authority strategies)

will not be taken into account but may have a real impact on supporting parent/carers to take-up, or maintain their use of, formal childcare.

Given difficulties raised regarding the availability of HMRC data and the potential impact of other strategies and initiatives it may be useful for local authorities to consider a wider set of data when assess impact at a local level.

Identifying priorities in targeted work can also be hindered by a lack of current data and small area data. There are however examples of where work is directed towards specific targets or communities, for example: **Wakefield** report a method of analysing available data at a small area level, and using that data to support RAG rating at children's centre level and targeting work accordingly (any children's area with below average take-up). In **Bradford** a research project was aimed specifically at exploring actions that encourage take-up of formal childcare and nursery education in Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.

5.3 Information, advice and support

There are a number of strategies aimed at providing information, advice and support to parent/carers and to partners to support the work of the CFIS and to promote the benefits of formal childcare and the childcare element of WTC. CFIS staff work in employer premises, children's centres, Jobcentres and at schools to promote formal childcare and support for the costs of childcare, for example: in **Rotherham**, information and advice sessions have been delivered to staff working in local businesses, at the workplace.

Training for childcare providers and key partners has been provided, or is planned, in **Wakefield, Bradford, Calderdale** and **Rotherham**. Training is aimed at raising awareness of support available for the costs of childcare, signposting and referrals. In some cases (e.g. **Calderdale and Rotherham**), staff are being trained and supported to deliver 'better off' calculations and to support the process of application for tax credits.

In **North Lincolnshire** senior development officers in the Childcare and Workforce team are working with 280 childcare providers in the PVI sector to promote WTC, delivering information and support in variety of ways: leaflets; posters; one on one discussion; as part of induction for new service users. In addition, a dedicated business support officer provides support and guidance to employers.

Jobcentre Plus initiatives are targeted at supporting parent/carers to access information, advice and support. For example, involvement in the childcare taster session pilot in Wakefield; outreach work in children's centres; training for customer-facing staff and encouraging advisors to promote the benefits of formal childcare

Local authority participants identify on-going marketing activities that promote support for childcare costs and disseminate information to parent/carers by a variety of means. For example, promotion of information at schools (**Calderdale**), a full page press advertisement (**Barnsley**), a bespoke publication 'Help paying for Childcare costs' delivered to every household in the area and to targeted locations (**Wakefield**).

Bradford have planned and are executing a comprehensive marketing strategy developed under a working group involving Jobcentre Plus, Early years Publicity and Communications, Early years Business Support and Bradford's Children's Information Link. The strategy involves the development of marketing and promotional materials, a media campaign and partnership work with Jobcentre Plus, children's centres, childcare providers, health visitors, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Extended Services, employer representatives and umbrella organisations, and others. This example highlights the potential effectiveness of planning and coordinating a range of activities involving multiple partners, to increase awareness and take-up of formal childcare and support for the costs of childcare.

There are identified areas of work that have either been discontinued, or are being re-considered, as a result of staffing level changes or changes to

priorities. For example, tax credit surgeries in **Rotherham** have been discontinued as a result of staff changes in the FIS. In other cases, partners have identified a lack of monitoring as a result of time constraints and other pressures of work (**Jobcentre Plus, North Lincolnshire**). These examples serve to highlight the potential need for a dedicated resource to support a coordinated strategy to support the take-up of formal childcare.

5.4 Working with Extended Services

There is some evidence of early work linking the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services. In North Lincolnshire a FIS senior development officer meets with Extended Services Cluster Coordinators on a regular basis and links with and distributes information to all schools in the local area. In Bradford the Jobcentre Plus Childcare Partnership manager has developed links with Extended Schools parental involvement workers, providing information on the range of services delivered by Jobcentre Plus to support parent/carers. In Wakefield, the Childcare Market Development Programme has funded two out of school childcare providers to register on the Ofsted Voluntary Childcare Register to enable parent/carers to access the childcare element of WTC.

Developing the Ofsted voluntary childcare register will provide a means of increasing the affordability (and sustainability) of childcare provision for older children within childcare sufficiency action plans but will require close and effective working protocols between extended services and early years and childcare.

6 Area profiles – key data

In this section of the report key area statistics are assessed to identify any patterns of similarity or difference that might contribute to the relatively low levels of take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit in the five lower performing areas, and in the higher performing area, Calderdale.

A review of area profiles does not identify any patterns that might obviously contribute to higher or lower take-up across the local authorities, for example:

- Economic activity levels in North Lincolnshire and Wakefield are higher than the average for the region and unemployment in North Lincolnshire is relatively low, showing a similar pattern to Calderdale. In the remaining three local authority areas, economic activity levels are lower than the region as a whole and unemployment levels are either in line, or slightly higher. Economic activity levels in Bradford are particularly low, combined with relatively high unemployment levels;
- Take-up of key out of work benefits is particularly high in Barnsley and higher than the regional average in Rotherham, Bradford and Wakefield;
- With the exception of North Lincolnshire gross weekly earnings and by residence and hourly pay in the lower-performing local authority areas are lower than the regional and national average. Seemingly contradicting earnings by residence data, a much higher proportion of employees in North Lincolnshire earn less than £7 per hour, which may suggest a greater disparity between higher and lower income families, or larger household sizes.
- The child population in Calderdale is higher than in other participating local authority areas, particularly amongst younger age ranges (0-9 years);
- The population of Bradford shows the greatest ethnic diversity with relatively high levels of Bangladeshi residents

6.1 Economic activity and take-up of benefits

Economic activity levels in Calderdale are higher than the Yorkshire & Humber region as a whole, marginally lower than found in GB; unemployment levels are lower. North Lincolnshire has higher economic activity levels than the region as a whole and a relatively low level of unemployment. Of the remaining three local authority areas, economic activity levels are lower and unemployment levels are either in line with the region (Wakefield) or slightly higher (Barnsley and Rotherham).

Economic activity and inactivity levels July 2007-June 2008

Local authority area	Economic activity	Unemployment	Economic inactivity
Barnsley	75.4%	5.9%	24.6%
Bradford	74.1%	6.5%	25.9%
Calderdale	78.1%	5.0%	21.9%
North Lincolnshire	79.6%	5.3%	20.4%
Rotherham	76.7%	5.8%	23.3%
Wakefield	78.1%	5.6%	21.9%
Yorkshire & Humber	77.7%	5.6%	22.3%
GB	78.8%	5.2%	21.2%

Source: ONS annual population survey. % is of those of working age. Unemployment (model-based) % is a proportion of economically active

6.1.1 Take-up of key out of work benefits

Key out of work benefits includes job seekers allowance, incapacity benefits, lone parent and others on income-related benefits. Take-up of key out of work benefits is particularly high in Barnsley and higher than the regional average in Rotherham and Wakefield. As with economic activity levels, take-up of key out of work benefits in North Lincolnshire is close to the average for GB and lower than found in the region as a whole.

Take-up of key out of work benefits August 2008

	Barnsley	Bradford	Calderdale	North Lincolnshire	Rotherham	Wakefield	Yorkshire & Humber	GB
Key benefits claimants	17.3%	14.1%	12.4%	11.8%	14.7%	14.2%	12.3%	11.9%

Source: DWP benefits claimants. % is a proportion of the working age population

6.1.2 Earnings and income

Gross weekly pay in North Lincolnshire is higher than the regional and national average, albeit that hourly pay is lower than the average for GB. With the exception of North Lincolnshire gross weekly earnings and by residence and hourly pay in the lower-performing local authority areas are lower than the regional and national average:

Earnings by residence 2008

Local authority area	Gross weekly pay	Hourly pay
Barnsley	£434.70	£10.88
Bradford	£390.60	£9.77
Calderdale	£451.20	£11.56
North Lincolnshire	£495.40	£11.04
Rotherham	£427.30	£10.28
Wakefield	£432.90	£10.24
Yorkshire & Humber	£443.80	£10.95
GB	£479.30	£12.01

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings (residence analysis). Median earnings for employees.

Data showing the proportion of employees earning less than £7 per hour however shows that North Lincolnshire has a relatively high percentage compared to the other local authority areas in the study. This may suggest larger household sizes, or greater disparities between higher and lower income families. All four lower performing local authorities have a higher

proportion of employees earning less than £7 an hour compared to Calderdale, the higher performing local authority. It may be interesting to review the proportion of employees working part-time, and the average number of part-time hours worked.

Proportion of employees paid less than £7 per hour

	Barnsley	Bradford	Calderdale	North Lincolnshire	Rotherham	Wakefield
% employees earning less than £7ph	28.3%	29.8%	23.1%	30.2%	29.4%	29.3%

Source: Annual survey of hours and earnings average of 2006 to 2008. District data poverty site: www.poverty.co.uk

6.1.3 Population demographics

The proportion of the population aged 0-14 years old is broadly similar in each local authority. Calderdale has the highest proportion of children (an estimated 18.6% of Calderdale's total population is aged 0-14 years old) and Wakefield has the lowest (an estimated 17.5% of Wakefield's total population is aged 0-14 years old):

Estimated child population by local authority

Local authority	% of total population aged			
	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	All 0-14 years
Barnsley	5.8%	5.5%	6.4%	17.7%
Bradford	5.8%	5.8%	6.5%	18.2%
Calderdale	6.2%	6.0%	6.4%	18.6%
North Lincolnshire	5.6%	5.7%	6.3%	17.6%
Rotherham	5.8%	5.8%	6.5%	18.2%
Wakefield	5.6%	5.5%	6.3%	17.5%

Source: ONS mid 2007 population estimates. Percentages rounded

Calderdale has the most ethnically diverse population – based on mid-2006 population estimates the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population in Calderdale accounted for nearly 10% of the total population.

The parent/carer childcare survey (2005) found considerably lower take-up of formal childcare by Pakistani, Bangladeshi and some Black groups. Within Yorkshire & Humber, Calderdale has a relatively high Pakistani population (5.5%) but has a high level of take-up of formal childcare as measured by the take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

Estimated resident population by ethnic group mid 2006

Ethnic group						Local authority, % of total population
	Barnsley	Bradford	Calderdale	North Lincolnshire	Rotherham	Wakefield
White	97.6%	74.9%	90.5%	96.3%	95.1%	96.0%
Mixed	0.6%	1.9%	1.1%	0.6%	0.8%	0.7%
Indian	0.4%	2.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.4%	0.6%
Pakistani	0.3%	15.6%	5.5%	0.5%	2.1%	1.4%
Bangladeshi	Neg	1.2%	0.3%	0.8%	Neg	Neg
Other Asian	0.1%	0.8%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Black Caribbean	Neg	0.7%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Black African	0.3%	0.8%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
Other Black	Neg	0.1%	Neg	Neg	Neg	Neg
Other ethnic group	0.4%	1.1%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%

Source: ONS Estimated resident population by ethnic group mid 2006 (experimental statistics). Percentages rounded.

7 DCSF pilots and other considerations

7.1 118 pilot local authorities

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is working with some of the local authorities that have adopted NI 118⁸ (12 have adopted the indicator as the national indicator, and three as the local indicator). The department and the participating local authorities argue that the increase of take-up of formal childcare is dependent upon the return to work journeys of parents.

The projects recognise that the (low income) parental journey into work and the take-up of formal childcare is a complex one and requires effective baton-passing across services. Pilot programmes are organised into seven themes⁹:

Encouraging the take-up of formal childcare	These programmes recognise that many families and communities avoid the use of formal childcare either because parents believe that the child is better with them, negative perceptions of formal childcare or because they prefer the use of family and friends as care providers.
Establishing the awareness of FIS and childcare options	The FIS provides the clearing house and brokerage service between formal care providers and parents. Ensuring that parents contact FIS when considering returning to work and/or looking for childcare that they will get the most accurate information available.

⁸ Cornwall, Lambeth, Leicester, Merton, Rochdale, Rotherham

⁹ Increasing the take-up of formal childcare and the childcare element of WTC DCSF

Improving the quality and availability of the supply of affordable childcare	The supporting of childminders and other childcare providers with a range of business and marketing support materials.
Implementing systems via FIS to ensure that supply and demand are linked	Ensuring that parents do receive accurate and appropriate information, and that providers do have occupancy levels that sustain their business, requires excellent information streams, software and IT systems and trained personnel to make the best use of them.
Baton passing – joining up the departments to facilitate the customer journey into work	Considered to be a significant challenge for local authorities – vital that agencies including Jobcentre Plus, DWP, HMRC, local health partners, schools etc. work together at key ‘pinch’ points to facilitate the journey into work and the take-up of tax credits.
Facilitating take-up specifically of childcare element of WTC	The complexity of the application process is exacerbated by parental fear of overpayments and repayment requirements.
Employers’ programmes	Employers need to be supported and encouraged to implement information programmes and providing help for applying for tax credits. Employer programmes are currently scarce.

7.2 Social and scientific marketing

The DCSF’s social and scientific models of marketing are reinforced within these programmes. Social marketing aims to change behaviours, attitudes

and beliefs specifically about formal childcare. This includes targeting households that are traditionally less well reached. The model has three basic approaches:

- Outreach – household visiting, working with community groups
- Local publicity/advertising campaigns – targeted at areas of low take-up – using door drops, posters etc.
- Taster sessions – childcare chats, stay and play, fathers groups, open days and childcare taster sessions

The DCSF's scientific marketing model includes:

- Targeted campaigns for childcare tax credit in areas where take-up is low
- Working with partners to disseminate information and act as information hubs e.g. employers, early years and childcare providers, children's centres, extended schools, Jobcentre Plus, Citizens' Advice Bureau etc.
- Using Jobcentre Plus and HMRC/DWP data to target households around children's centres
- Training for early years and childcare providers, staff in children's centres, the whole range of information providers to provide application and access support
- Web-based tools for parents to find childcare provision, financial support, and activities for older children
- Enhanced information exchange between early years, childcare and activity providers with FIS (including vacancies, waiting lists, costs) and availability of this information for parents

A communications tool-kit for local authorities has been provided on CD Rom and supports choosing the right message for different audiences. It contains a range of resources including order forms for generic leaflets and posters relating to specific messages for marketing purposes.

7.3 Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare

The DCSF's refresh of the 10 Year Childcare Strategy published in January 2009 set new aims to provide more coherent and transparent support for parents with an increased support role through brokerage for the FIS. To support a more proactive approach to tax credit promotion, a tax credit ready reckoner has been developed and is currently being piloted to aid the provision of front-line indicative eligibility information. On a national level, there will also be an increased role for the national helpline number through a contact centre approach.

7.4 Raising the take-up of childcare among BME families

Following strong evidence that take-up is low among some groups, the DCSF has been working with six local authorities to pilot approaches to increase take-up and effect reach. A tool-kit has been developed that aims to support local authorities develop an overall strategy. Key elements of the strategy include understanding the parents' journey into work, sufficiency strategy and coordination between key stakeholders. Using data effectively has also been identified to target first step actions and to support 'reaching out' to engage stakeholders early on using a range of communication methods as part of a coordinated marketing campaign. Again, the direct promotion of tax credits has been identified as being a key part of the strategy along with the measurement of outcomes and impact. Alongside this work, the DCSF has published a tool-kit to promote free early learning for Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents.

8 Participating local authority summary findings

Individual local authority proforma information was provided under agreed areas of investigation:

- Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned;
- Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits (to parent/carers and to providers and partners);
- Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit);
- Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families);
- Monitoring systems;
- Media campaigns and marketing drives

Submitted proforma have been summarised to produce area reports detailed in the remainder of this section

8.1 Local authority: Barnsley

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

- None identified

2 Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

- None identified

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- Tax credit information is disseminated by the FIS staff team; all enquirers are asked if they know about and receive tax credits;
- Enquirers are sign-posted to the HMRC website and those without internet access are sent hard copies of the appropriate leaflets downloaded from the HMRC website
- Enquirers are given the tax credit help-line number and informed of the tax credit calculator at HMRC (on-line).

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- None identified

4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

Information on take-up was collated in the Childcare Sufficiency Survey 2007.

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
FIS	The FIS is currently undertaking outreach with a teenage parent group. Information provided includes tax credits and Care to Learn.		

6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
FIS enquiries	All enquirers are asked about knowledge and take up of tax credits; data is recorded	

7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

There has been a recent (Feb 09) campaign with a full page advert in a local free newspaper delivered across the borough.

The local authority is currently creating a flyer with general tax credit information to give to clients/take on outreach.

8.2 Local authority: Bradford

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

Strategy	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Recent – employer project	Consultation with employers in 2007 to ascertain the importance of childcare to employers and awareness/use of WTC and childcare vouchers.	Survey findings identified a number of key issues including barriers to access, and a lack of information	
Recent – ‘Crossing the Threshold’ study	A 2007 research project exploring actions that encourage the take-up of formal childcare and nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds in Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in Bradford.	The project identified a number of issues that inform understanding and recommendations for developing take-up and access.	
Current - promoting financial support for childcare costs	Comprehensive marketing strategy developed under a working group (Jobcentre Plus, Early Years Publicity and Communications, EY Business	The project was scheduled for completion in March 2009 however, it was anticipated that aspects of	The local authority has provided a comprehensive outline of the marketing

	<p>Support, Bradford Children’s Information Link). The aim of the strategy is to raise awareness among all families of both types of financial support for childcare – the childcare element of WTC and childcare vouchers. The strategy involves the development of marketing/promotional literature, a media campaign and partnership work with Jobcentre Plus, children’s centres, childcare providers, health visitors, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Extended Services, employer representative and umbrella organisations and others.</p>	<p>the work would be embedded in the work of participating bodies and individuals.</p>	<p>strategy, with costings for printing promotional materials.</p>
<p>Current/ongoing – Jobcentre Plus</p>	<p>Jobcentre Plus advisors provide back to work calculations for parent/carers looking at returning to work. Parent/carers are signposted to the Family Information Service. Jobcentre Plus advisors work with HMRC and have</p>		

	in place a fast track system to process WTC claims. Jobcentre Plus has a linked advisor for all Bradford children's centres, providing outreach work to parent/carers.		
Current/on-going – Children's Information Link	Most Children's Information Link (CIL) have accessed tax credits training and all staff promote tax credits when dealing with enquiries as appropriate.		
On-going – partnership working	As part of the marketing strategy (outlined above) partners are involved via training and a network of information sharing to ensure that as many people as possible feel confident to deliver information.		
Current – Children's Information Link	The Children's Information Link promotes working tax credits to all parent/carers.		
Planned – training for childcare providers	There are plans to invite all childcare providers to attend a practical training seminar on WTC/Child Tax Credit		

2. Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

The Jobcentre Plus partnership manager has developed links with Extended Schools parental involvement workers and provided information on the range of services delivered by Jobcentre Plus to support parent/carers (e.g. back to work calculations, fast track tax credits).

There are links between Early Years/Children's Information Link and Extended Services and Parental Involvement teams with plans to undertake a parental survey at local schools to ascertain baseline data.

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- As previously outlined, there is a comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy that aims to deliver effective information and advice to parent/carers using a variety of formats and working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders;

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- Incorporated into the marketing strategy, childcare providers and partners are regarded as integral to the success of the project/on-going work. Training is provided to childcare providers (see 1. above) and the marketing strategy working group takes responsibility for ensuring that all partners are kept up to date with information.

3.3 Potential improvements

- More up to date/frequent HMRC data

4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

HMRC data (annual confirmed and snapshot data) is accessed and analysed but the local authority identifies that HMRC data is limited in terms of being able to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives. The local authority reports that their progress is limited by a lack of more recent/small area data.

Data is available from the employer's survey and from the 'Crossing the Threshold' study.

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Family support teams	Working from/within children's centres, family support teams are responsible for outreach work.		
Uptake of childcare by BME	A new project is planned to address the		

families	uptake of childcare places by BME families will involve outreach work with BME and low income families		
2 year old pilot (extended), commissioned 2 year old places, supported daycare project (respite places for children in need in children's centres) and the Child Development bid (financial incentive to parent/carers who actively engage with children's centres)	The projects require outreach work to identify those children who would most benefit. The projects, alongside helping the outcomes of children in early education, also have the long-term objective of encouraging parents into training and eventually work with the use of the financial support available in the form of WTC.		
Children's Information Link	Dedicated staff in the 33 children's centres; much of their work includes working with hard to reach groups		
Jobcentre Plus	Outreach work in children's centres		

6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
Children's Information Link	Tracks and monitors enquiries. All partners have a feedback form to monitor their enquiries from parent/carers and any outcomes.	
HMRC	HMRC data is coupled with in-house research and information to analyse take-up by family characteristic. Information is available to all EYCPS officers and is shared periodically with the working group.	
Survey of parent/carers, monitoring impact	The local authority plans to survey parent/carers via schools to ascertain levels of awareness and take-up of the childcare element of WTC and childcare vouchers and to repeat the survey at set periods to monitor the effectiveness of the marketing campaign. This project will link	

	via Jobcentre plus to the Local Employment Partnership and CIL staff in a children's centre in one selected pilot area to promote WTC and monitor take-up by individuals supported into work.	
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7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

The local authority reports that the FIS would be better prepared/able to support national campaigns if advised in advance of their launch.

The marketing strategy developed by the local authority and partners has been previously outlined.

The local authority identifies a negative impact on parent's willingness to claim support [via WTC) as a result of negative publicity around parents being required to re-pay overpayments.

8.3 Local authority: Calderdale

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

Strategy	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Recent – staff training	<p>Bespoke training for children’s centre staff was undertaken in 2007 with the aim of raising awareness of the tax credits system and enabling practitioners to feel more confident in calculating basic entitlements.</p> <p>FIS staff have also attended training to raise levels of knowledge and competency.</p>		
Planned – training	<p>Training is planned for all community/parent link workers based in area teams so that parent/carers who do not engage with the FIS can receive</p>		

	information		
On-going – calculation of entitlements	The FIS offer to calculate entitlements to tax credits for any parent who wishes it and use is made of several national on-line calculators to assist with this.		

2 Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

The FIS regularly attends Extended Schools events (e.g. parent’s evenings) to promote the take-up of tax credits. Newly appointed parent support advisors will play a key role in promoting tax credits to partners via schools/transition information sessions etc.

Work is underway to introduce a charging policy in Extended Schools by 2010 and where appropriate registration on the Ofsted Voluntary Childcare Register will be encouraged.

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- The FIS is a key partner in delivering information on tax credit entitlements to parent/carers. Use is made of HMRC leaflets and booklets and a simple ‘help with the costs of childcare’ leaflet has been produced in house;

- Information leaflets are sent out with every childcare/early education enquiry taken by the FIS and are distributed to partners such as children's centres, libraries, health visitors and childcare providers;
- Children's centre newsletters contain reminders to parent/carers about claiming tax credits/benefits to which they are entitled and children's centres run advice sessions for parent/carers;
- A card advertising the work of the FIS in providing information on childcare/early education and tax credits was distributed to every school child in Calderdale;
- The local authority reports finding Daycare Trust useful in providing simple information to parents about tax credits.

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- Not specifically identified but recent and planned training outlined in section 1 involves the dissemination of information to children's centre and community/parent link workers;
- Providers and partners receive information leaflets to distribute to parent/carers;

4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

The local authority has identified difficulties in obtaining regularly updated data from HMRC/Jobcentre Plus partners. The closure of the on-line portal by HMRC has caused FIS problems as this was used with parent/carers to assist with applications.

Specific questions around awareness and take-up of tax credits were asked as part of the 2007/08 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Community/parent link workers	Deliver the message about tax credits in disadvantaged areas.		

6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
FIS enquiries	Enquiries to the FIS around calculation of tax credits are logged and monitored.	

7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

National media campaigns have resulted in an increase in calls to the FIS although a recent campaign targeting Pakistani and Bangladeshi families caused some issues with language barriers at the point of contact with the FIS.

8.4 Local authority: North Lincolnshire

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

Strategy	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
On-going – family support workers	Family support workers are aware of and promote [the] welfare benefits service, identifying issues during universal visits and other sessions and signposting appropriately.	Take-up of WTC is detailed in the quarterly report	
On-going – Crosby Employment Bureau	Welfare benefits advice is provided by Crosby Employment Bureau or sign-posted at each centre. Partnership working arrangements include signposting parent/carers to various funding streams including LSC and Care to Learn	Take-up of the service is detailed in quarterly reports	
On-going – Academy for Community Training	Partnership working to promote parent/carers training packages which		

	include benefits, work skills, building confidence and self-esteem.		
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2 Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

- There is a dedicated staff team that supports the private, voluntary and independent sector including Extended Services. The staff team works with providers to encourage and support those not currently registered on the Ofsted Voluntary Register to do so;
- All new provision is being directed towards registration early on in the process;
- Integrated Service and Cluster coordinators work closely with Extended Services;
- A FIS senior development officer meets with Extended Services cluster coordinators on a regular basis and also links with and distributes information to, all school in the local authority area.

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- 'Warm phones' and single point of access to services is available via Kidslinks;
- Information is provided to parent/carers via family workers, welfare benefits advisors and the FIS (as detailed in section 1);
- Parent/carers are signposted to Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and HMRC;

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- Senior development officers in the Childcare and Workforce team are working with 280 childcare providers in the private, voluntary and independent sector to promote Working Tax Credit. Information and support is delivered in a variety of ways – leaflets, posters, one on one discussion and as part of induction for new service users; a dedicated business support officer provides support and guidance to employers;
- A dedicated business support officer offers support and guidance to employers;
- Staff are kept up to date via NCB, Ofsted and HMRC information;

3.3 Potential improvements

- There is currently little engagement with Jobcentre Plus, according to the local authority due to Jobcentre Plus' limited staffing capacity

4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

The following has been identified:

- Snapshot data from Government Office detailing the number of families in the area taking up Working Tax Credit;
- Children's centre quarterly reports;
- Parental satisfaction surveys within children's centres

The local authority identified negative media reporting around people claiming and then having to pay back payments as a barrier to applying for tax credits.

The local authority also identifies that they are currently working with '2 to 3 year old data from DCSF' and that more up to date information is required.

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Planned – FIS consultations with 'hard to reach' families	Consultation with 'hard to reach' families has been highlighted as a key task as part of the Childcare Sufficiency update to identify barriers and needs. This will include awareness of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit.		
On-going – family support workers	Detailed in section 1		

6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
Children's centre quarterly reports	Information is collated in each locality and supplied to the Performance Manager ISM.	
Shared data	The local authority and health services share information; data not specified.	
Welfare benefits sessions	Outcomes (take-up) are monitored, see section 1.	

7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

The local authority has identified a range of media campaigns and marketing drives:

- A range of promotional materials (posters, leaflets etc.) available in childcare settings, schools, children's centres, connexions;
- Information provided by the FIS;
- Participation by the FIS in a radio campaign with other local authorities (not detailed);
- A national campaign with health professionals that resulted in an increase in telephone enquiries at Kidslinks;
- A general awareness of national campaigns across the local authority and general promotion

The local authority identified a number of future ideas

- Links with stakeholders and identification of common grounds;
- Marketing/publicity to join services and agendas;
- Targeting hard to reach families through multi-agency cooperation;
- Promote WTC through National Family week and National Parenting week.

8.5 Local authority: Rotherham

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

Strategy	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Recent – Tax credit surgeries in children’s centres	Rotherham’s senior FIS officer held regular tax credit surgeries in children’s centres where parent/carers received information, advice and estimates of their tax credit entitlement as well as support with overpayment issues. Surgeries now discontinued due to staff changes within the FIS (see next)	Rotherham has identified a range of initiatives, including initiatives aimed at disseminating information to parent/carers and childcare providers. It is reported that the cumulative impact of these initiatives has been to increase tax credit enquiries to the FIS (e.g. from 46 in 2007 to 171 in 2008).	The majority of initiatives have been delivered within existing FIS capacity but given recent changes in staff for the team the local authority is re-assessing how tax credits and childcare will be promoted in the future (March2009).
Recent/current - Outline training to key children’s centre staff	Key staff working within children’s centres are being given outline training regarding tax credits and who and when to refer/signpost parent/carers to.		
Current - working in partnership with Jobcentre	FIS staff regularly attend Jobcentre Plus staff meetings to raise awareness about	It is reported that Jobcentre Plus has advised that	

<p>Plus</p>	<p>the support available through the service. The aim is to encourage Jobcentre Plus staff to refer to the FIS or to contact the FIS on behalf of a client if childcare as a barrier to work is identified.</p>	<p>childcare is not a barrier [to work] for Rotherham clients.</p> <p>Referrals from the local Jobcentre Plus are reported to have been low.</p>	
<p>Recent – working with employers</p>	<p>Information sessions for employers to discuss flexible working schemes and schemes to make childcare more affordable have been offered to ensure that employers can promote childcare affordability to their employees. Outreach sessions at employers have also been offered.</p>	<p>Sessions with employers were usually taken up when an employer was trying to facilitate a certain outcome, either implementing flexible working or a voucher scheme, and tax credit information has been provided as an added extra. Providing an outreach session with an employer without firstly discussing the needs of the employer was not effective as few</p>	

		<p>employees attended to discuss their issues. Information sessions normally followed a meeting with the organisation's management after which information was disseminated to staff.</p>	
Recent – childcare taster sessions	<p>Free childcare taster vouchers were provided over a limited period to encourage non-users to try out childcare for free, or to try and different type of childcare free of charge (offered one session or a four hour block).</p>	<p>Take-up was as follows: June 2007 – February 2008 = 868 June 2008 – December 2008 = 1122</p>	
On-going – FIS outreach work	<p>The FIS outreach team promotes tax credits and other support available via the FIS at outreach events including baby clinics, parenting groups and school open days. Presentations are also given to</p>		

	local organisations who work with parents on information and support available via the FIS.		
Recent – a support pack for key partners	A support pack was developed for key partners (e.g. Jobcentre Plus and children’s centres) to support staff to provide information on tax credits to parent/carers		
Planned/under consideration – tax credits tool kit	A tax credits tool kit for family support and outreach workers		
Planned/under consideration – increasing/improving partnership working	To work more closely with employers and childcare providers as take-up of outreach/information sessions has been low		

2 Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

None identified

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- An easy to understand tax credit booklet, including a ready recknor and contact numbers has been produced and is sent to all FIS enquirers and taken to all outreach events and given to parent/carers at outreach events in an information bag;
- FIS staff are trained to deliver information on tax credits and give estimations to enquirers. Staff also know who and when to refer/signpost on to other agencies;

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- The FIS offered information sessions to childcare providers and their staff to raise awareness of tax credits and childcare vouchers. Providers were given an information session, tax credit and childcare voucher information leaflets to give to parent/carers and signposting information to the FIS. Some childcare providers also provided a link to the FIS from their website which has generated tax credit enquiries;
- The FIS has worked with a number of groups (children's centres, employers, childcare providers, Family Support Workers, Jobcentre Plus and other local organisations) to support staff to deliver information on what parent/carers may be entitled to via tax credits and the benefits of formal childcare with information to signpost parent/carers to the FIS for further information

3.3 Potential improvements

- Improved partnership working with Jobcentre Plus

4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

HMRC take-up data and local analysis based on HMRC data. The local authority notes that there can be a significant delay in receiving tax credit take-up data, particularly at SOA level, and that this can impact on the currency and use of the data.

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
On-going – FIS outreach work	Described in 1 and 3 above.		
Planned – promotion of the take-up of formal childcare	Recent award of funding to promote the take-up of formal childcare, based primarily within the marketing and business support team		
Planned – work with BME families	A BME coordinator has recently been employed on a short-term basis to work on a BME pilot project.		

Current – Care to Learn	A designated Care to Learn officer is employed		
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6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
FIS statistics	FIS enquiries	
HMRC take-up data	See 4. above	

7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

The local authority has developed in-house tax credit information and promotional materials which are distributed via the FIS.

8.6 Local authority: Wakefield

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

Strategy	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Recent – working with employers	A work:life balance tool kit was distributed to all major employers in 2006. The tool kit promoted the financial assistance available with childcare costs. In addition, links with employers have been strengthened though contact with a range of organisation (Yorkshire Employers coalition; Wakefield First; Business Link; Chamber of Commerce; Jobcentre Plus; A.L.L. Recruitment; federation of small businesses).		
Recent – formal marketing course for childcare providers	Registered providers of full daycare, after school and/or holiday childcare services were offered attendance at two half-day	The local authority maximises value for money grants by empowering local	

	<p>formal marketing courses as part of the local authority's approach to supporting sustainability. The second half-day was aimed at supporting providers to develop a marketing plan that could be used as the basis for a sustainability grant application (up to £500) to support the implementation of their marketing plan. Part of the grant criteria was that evidence should be provided of plans to promote the benefits of registered childcare and the availability of help with childcare costs including the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit.</p>	<p>providers to carry out local promotion while at the same time, benefiting providers.</p>	
<p>On-going – Parent Direct</p>	<p>The FIS participates in Parent Direct, a service which helps parent/carers access information, advice and guidance on flexible working and working parents' rights. This includes a tax credits estimator and information on how</p>		

	childcare vouchers might impact on tax credits payments.		
On-going – ‘help paying for childcare costs’	A publication providing information about the financial support available to help pay for childcare, distributed to all households in the local authority area (October – November 2008) direct mailings to key locations (see section 3.1)	The FIS has received a ‘significant’ increase in positive telephone enquiries relating to this campaign – FIS enquiries are reported to have increased by 55% in one week with the majority of enquiries having been for tax credit calculations and vouchers and enquiries to ascertain what childcare is available in the local area	The cost of the campaign was £5,806 to produce 170,000 leaflets and £5,965 postage (total £11,771, roughly 7p per household),
On-going – FIS work	The local authority has identified a range of work undertaken by the FIS including: general promotion of WTC to any enquirer; promotion at outreach events; ‘better off’ calculation and appropriate		

	referrals; production of a promotional DVD (see section 3.1)		
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2 Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

- The Extended Schools newsletter has the FIS 'strapline' on it, signposting for further information;
- The local authority has requested that Headteacher/Extended Services in Schools Coordinators display a leaflet on all school notice boards;
- Plans are in place to work with children's centres to voluntary register any crèche provision that they operate;
- The Childcare Market Development Programme has funded two out of school childcare providers to voluntary register to enable parent/carers to access the childcare element of WTC;
- The Childcare Market Development Programme has established an out of school network and promoted the take-up of the childcare element of WTC at the initial meeting. This forum has also produced a briefing/presentation on Ofsted registration and the implications;
- Guidance has been sent to schools on providing advice on childcare and strongly encouraging schools to signpost to the FIS.

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- 'Help paying for childcare' leaflet – distributed to every household between October and November 2008 and direct mailings of the leaflet to key locations (e.g. schools, GP surgeries, children's centres, employers, childcare settings; libraries and dentists);
- A DVD has been produced raising awareness of the help with childcare costs and the benefits of using registered quality childcare, complementing the childcare costs leaflet

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- Not specifically identified although recent strategies (see section 1) and strategies to link to provision for older children and/or Extended Schools services include the dissemination of information and literature in a variety of ways;
- Stakeholders and partners are kept up to date with take-up information through an action plan and regular updates through an Early Childhood and Extended Services Strategic Planning group;
- Children's centres are informed of updates through the SEFs.

4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

Information on take-up rates is received from GOY&H but is not timely enough (e.g. data relating to 2006/07 received July 2008). Early plans are in place to start analysis FIS data relating to enquiries from parent/carers who have expressed an interest in accessing the childcare element of WTC in order to track take-up from initial enquiries.

The local authority commissioned work to investigate common barrier affecting take-up of the childcare element of WTC by researching the difference between parental circumstances and perceptions in areas of low and high take-up.

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
Identifying target areas	Snapshot data provided by GOY&H in December 2008 has been plotted onto a GIS map to outline levels of take-up at SOA, plotted against children's centre reach areas.	Children's centres that have SOA areas RAG rated (any rated below the average of 17%) have been tasked with targeting families to increase take-up via children's centre staff and monitored through the SEFs.	These targets will be cross-referenced to employment/workless data in the future

6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
Take-up of childcare vouchers	As part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, registered childcare providers have been asked to identify the number of parent/carers using a childcare voucher system.	This enables the Childcare and Market Development Programme to carry out further work to compare the take-up of childcare vouchers to take-up of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

The local authority has identified a range of media campaigns and marketing drives including the ‘help for paying with childcare costs’ leaflet and the promotional DVD. Posters have also been developed and have been distributed across the district since 2007 (‘little red riding hood’ poster.

There has been negative publicity around the miscalculation of funding resulting in a prison sentence.

8.7 Jobcentre Plus

Four Jobcentre Plus representatives completed a proforma and provided information to inform the project (Wakefield, Leeds, North Lincolnshire and Rotherham). For comparison purposes, responses have been summarised below, showing the Jobcentre Plus area in brackets.

1. Strategies for increasing the take-up of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit over the past 24 months, including any planned

Strategy	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
(Wakefield) Recent – information for advisors	The Jobcentre Plus (JCP) partnership manager has presented to all staff on aspects of the Child Poverty Agenda, including encouraging JCP advisors to promote the benefits of using formal childcare to all parent customers.		
(Wakefield) – Current/on-going – childcare taster pilot	Working with the FIS in the Hemsworth JCP area, offer 2 hours of free childcare as a taster for eligible parent/carers.	Pilot started in 11/08 and will need to run for a longer period before a full evaluation can be undertaken. Expected	

		outcomes are 40 parent/carers taking up the free childcare offer and 'a lesser number being referred to FIS for other childcare information provision'.	
(Wakefield) On-going - work with the local authority	FIS are invited to present throughout the year to all staff in Jobcentres in the cluster		
(Leeds) Recent – working with parents via JCP offices and by outreach	JCP funded two additional members of Leeds Childcare to Work team, providing additional support for parent/carers both in JCP offices and in children's centres and other locations who are seeking childcare to enable them to start work or training.	Statistics available to show the number of parents starting work or training	Cost of initiative = £66k pa.
(North Lincolnshire) Recent - presentations to customer	The JCP Childcare Partnership manager has delivered Child Poverty presentations		

<p>facing staff</p>	<p>to all customer facing staff, including encouraging JCP advisors to promote the benefits of using formal childcare among all parent customers. Also facilitated presentations by external partners to promote the benefits of childcare and to ensure that staff are informed of all initiatives and information to help them in their interviews with customers.</p>		
<p>(Rotherham) Recent - presentations to customer facing staff</p>	<p>The JCP Childcare Partnership manager has delivered Child Poverty presentations to all customer facing staff, including encouraging JCP advisors to promote the benefits of using formal childcare among all parent customers. Partners have also been invited to help deliver the presentations to give a more comprehensive approach for sharing information and promoting an increased take-up of formal childcare.</p>		

(Rotherham) Information for parent/carers	Working with the local authority, has produced information handouts explaining the benefits of formal childcare to be distributed by customer facing staff. Each children’s centre has been provided with a JCP information folder detailing the help that JCP can offer including help with tax credits and better off calculations.		
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2 Strategies undertaken, or planned, to link the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to provision for older children and/or provision via Extended Schools services

(Leeds) JCP records were evaluated to show where customers identified a lack of childcare/out of school provision proving a barrier to seeking work or training and cascaded the information to the local authority to inform the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

(Leeds) The Childcare Partnership Manager attends Extended Schools network meetings to ensure the requirements for childcare are high on the agenda.

(North Lincolnshire) Information has been provided to JCP staff on the Extended Schools agenda; staff are encouraged to contact Kidsline if provision for older children is a barrier to a parent/carer taking up an offer of work.

(Rotherham) Staff are encouraged to make referrals to FIS to cater for older children who may need childcare facilities e.g. after school clubs.

3 Provision of information about childcare take-up and tax credits

3.1 Information for parent/carers

- (Wakefield) JCP promotes tax credits through advisors; however, it is suggested that HMRC's decision not to reprint their tax credit leaflet but to encourage web-based applications only, must have impacted on numbers taking up support.
- (Rotherham) JCP advisor delivers surgeries in children's centres, offering support to parent/carers claiming tax credits

3.2 Information for providers and partners

- (Leeds) Limited information on take-up of tax credits has been relayed to the local authority, provided, when available, by Government Office.
- (Leeds) Links have been made with employers via the West Yorkshire Employer Coalition; JCP Childcare Partnership Manager has delivered a presentation at a recent conference to show how childcare information could assist both in staff retention and recruitment (included a questionnaire produced by the local authority asking for views on staff requirements for childcare).

- (North Lincolnshire) Details of all initiatives and changes are promoted internally and externally via children's centres (referrals are not tracked due to time constraints and other pressures of work)

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4 Information held regarding current take-up rates (of childcare and/or the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit)

(Wakefield) JCP routinely capture the number of referrals to the FIS by office through the Labour Market System (LMS).

(Leeds) Data is provided by Government Office. Barriers to work data identified by JCP customers has been forwarded to the local authority (latest data available).

5 Outreach work with low income families (outreach work undertaken specifically with low income families and hard to reach families)

Specific outreach work	Outline	Outcomes	Comment
(Wakefield) Presentation to a financial inclusion for families group	HMRC were invited to present to a financial Inclusion for families group that met in one of the deprived wards. The presentations was aimed at partners delivering services to low income families (July07)		
(Wakefield) JCP advisors	Two JBC advisors have been deployed in Wakefield working with children's centres and through a Tenants into Work initiative; they promote WTC where appropriate		
(Leeds) Outreach work	JCP has three trained advisors working as children's centre outreach staff.	Work is reported to be increasing rapidly and innovative actions include a recent employer event where a local company	

		interviewed for new staff and 18 parent/carers started on formal work trials (held at a children's centre)	
(North Lincolnshire) Recent – outreach work	An advisor from Scunthorpe JCP used to do outreach at all North Lincolnshire children's centres (reported to be successful in maintaining contact with parent/carers)	Now ceased as a result of staffing constraints.	

6 Monitoring systems

Identified monitoring systems		
(Leeds)	Data on take-up of tax credits is supplied at infrequent intervals resulting in difficulty formulating any comparisons.	

7 Media campaigns and marketing drives

(Wakefield) JCP Childcare Partnership Manager raised awareness of national campaigns among advisors in all Jobcentres in Wakefield, Castleford, Hemsworth and Pontefract through email and internal web pages.

(Rotherham) JCP Childcare Partnership Manager identified mainly using partners to promote the take-up of tax credits to customer-facing staff. Staff are informed that JCP is committed to contributing to DWP/DCSF PSA target PSA3b to increase the take-up of formal childcare.