



Making equality a reality.... Care and Caring

A summary and discussion of the implications of data from the Gender Audit of Statistics [Breitenbach, E. and Wasoff, F. Scottish Executive Social Research 2007] relating to care and caring prepared by S. Macpherson, Engender Associate and E. Thomson.

Gender Audit Findings

Childcare Provision:

- There have since 1997 been significant increases in the rates of participation in pre-school education. For example, in 2003, 83% of children in Scotland aged 3 years and 99% of children aged 4 years were in pre-school education. In 2006, around 11% of childcare provision was provided by childminders, with the majority of children in day-care or pre-school centres (or a mixture of types of care).
- In 2006, the majority of nurseries were in the public sector (63%), with 26% in the private sector. Most playgroups (89%) and out of school clubs (58%) are provided by the voluntary sector.
- Childcare availability differs widely across local authority areas. In 2005, Aberdeen city (89 places per 100 children aged 0-4 years) and Edinburgh city (82 places per 100 children aged 0-4 years) had the highest provision, while North Lanarkshire (with 43 places per 100 children aged 0-4 years) and West Lothian (with 46 places per 100 children aged 0-4 years) had the lowest.
- Taking all forms of childcare provision for children aged 0-14 years into account, figures from 2004 show that Shetland (23.8 places per 1000 children), Highland (21 places per 1000 children), and Eilean Siar (20.8 places per 1000 children) had the highest level of childcare provision. The areas with the lowest provision were North Lanarkshire (7 places per 1000 children), West Dunbartonshire (7.6 places per 1000 children) and Glasgow (8.1 places per 1000 children).
- Recent research commissioned by the Scottish Executive indicated that lack of availability of suitable childcare was a major issue for particular groups of parents e.g. lone parents, parents of children with special needs, those with older children and those living in rural communities.
- This research also indicated that there was a lack of awareness amongst parents of the available childcare options and their cost, which may limit demand. Parents were not utilising local authorities in great numbers to find

out about childcare options (15%), with most using no information sources (48%) or word of mouth (35%).

Informal Childcare:

- Research commissioned by the Scottish Executive has also indicated that many parents have a preference for informal care provision by family, neighbours or friends. This is partly informed by a view that children were likely to suffer if both parents go out to work (in 2004 40% of parents of pre-school children held this view).
- Even where formal provision is used it can be complemented by informal provision. For example, in 2003/04, care for children 0-16 years was provided as follows: 58% informal only; 14% a mix of formal and informal; 28% formal only.
- The research also indicated that trust was a central issue in choosing the main childcare provider (cited by 64% of parents in 2004). Going out to work was the main reason for using childcare provision (cited by 54% of parents), while finance was the central reason for going out to work (68% of parents).

Care Givers and Recipients:

- Within couple households, 64% of women in 1999 were mostly responsible for childcare compared with only 2% of men, with around one-third of both women and men saying that they shared childcare. This figure is not likely to have changed significantly in the intervening years.
- In 2005 women were the majority of those who provided other informal care (beyond childcare) both in their own homes (58%) and outside their homes (63%). Women of working age are the most likely to have caring responsibilities both inside and outside the home. Of women caring for others in the home, 72% were in the 16-64 age group, while of men caring for others in the home 65% were in this age group. Similar proportions of women and men (85%) caring for others outside the home were in the 16-64 age group.
- In 2004, 62% of unpaid carers were female and 38% male. Of those providing care in the household, men were more likely to be caring for a spouse or partner (65% compared with 49% of female carers), while women were more likely to be caring for a parent (32% compared with 13% of male carers).
- In 2004, a third of all carers were aged 60 or over, with women more likely to provide care in their household (58% of such carers) and outside (63% of such carers). Sole carers were more likely to be female (64%) and also tended to be older carers.

- Women were also more likely than men to be the recipients of care (61% of care recipients). In 2005, the proportion of those requiring care who are women grows with age, with women for example making up 81% of those aged 85+ who required regular help and care. This reflects women's longevity and the deterioration in health that may experience at this age.
- Women made up the majority of those receiving home care services (67%) in 2006. While the majority of recipients of home care in all age groups, this was particularly noticeable in the older age groups e.g. 71% of home care clients aged 75-84 years and 77% of home care clients aged 85+ years.

Care Workforce:

- The childcare workforce (like most other public sector workforces, and the care workforce in particular) is dominated by women - 98% of pre-school education and childcare staff in 2005 were female.
- In 2004, the majority of childminders had no childcare qualifications (75%), while approximately a third (33%) of other childcare workers had no childcare qualifications. A further third (31%) held a childcare qualification at SVQ4+ level, which includes a degree or equivalent. The majority of childcare workers and childminders have no qualifications in a subject other than childcare (55% and 56% respectively).
- As with the childcare workforce, women make up the majority of the social care workforce. For example, in 2005 84% of the Social Work Services (SWS) staff were female. Most jobs in SWS are in Adult Community Care (61%) where women make up 89% of the workforce, while men are far more likely to work with offenders (37% of the staff in this area).
- In 2005, women made up 96% of domiciliary staff, 93% of day care staff in services for children and families, 91% of residential staff in services for people with physical impairments and 89% of residential staff in services for older people. While overall numbers in this profession are low, men are highly represented as residential staff in services for offenders (44%).
- Women made up the majority of SWS Staff Managers (with 72% of all managers being women) in 2005. There was however variation in the gender balance of managers across service areas with women making up 95% of Home Care Managers, Assistance Care Managers and Supervisors and only 35% of area managers of fieldwork staff.

Discussion

Caring is a varied and complex issue. There are both informal and formal mechanisms for the delivery of care. Informal care includes care by relatives, friends and neighbours, while formal care services include provision and funding by government agencies for childcare, services and support for older children who require care, and caring services for disabled people and older

people. There are varied formal care mechanisms e.g. pre-school provision for younger children, home based care, and support for a range of groups with care needs that intend to facilitate 'independent living' e.g. Direct Payments.

There are different government bodies involved in supporting and/or facilitating the delivery of care services. At the UK level the main focus of policy is on supporting working parents through measures such as flexible working policies, maternity and paternity pay and leave, and tax credits. In Scotland, recent policy on childcare has focused on the importance of good quality childcare and its benefits for children through development and learning, and its benefits for parents through opportunities for participation in the labour market. The SNP have highlighted a continued concern with improving childcare services to match children's needs and parents working patterns. The concern is to increase the provision of free nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds, with longer hours of free provision also planned.

The Strategy for Carers in Scotland, introduced in 1999 under the previous political administration, set out to: develop services for carers; set standards for care and respite services; develop monitoring of local authority Community Care plans; the need for carers' legislation; and provide better information for carers. The Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 introduced free personal and nursing care for everyone in Scotland aged 65 and over who needed it either for home care, hospital care or for a care home. The Act also stressed that the NHS and local authorities need to support and recognise the important role played by informal carers. The SNP are concerned to ensure that free personal care is implemented across Scotland and also highlight the important role performed by unpaid carers. They have committed therefore to implement the conclusions of the Care 21 Report on the Future of Unpaid care in Scotland.

The preference by many families for informal childcare needs to be taken into consideration in further rolling out formal childcare provision. However, while informal childcare is generally preferred, there are particular groups who require formal childcare services for a range of reasons e.g. lone parents and low income households who wish to pursue employment options. There are also particular benefits of formal childcare that need perhaps to be highlighted more, notably regarding improvements in child development and education. Measures to support families to facilitate informal childcare need also to be improved e.g. flexible working, tax/benefit changes, and payments for informal carers.

We need within this policy context to recognise that care continues to be a gendered issue, with women taking on the major share of responsibility for caring whether as unpaid carers or as paid workers. Women are the majority of unpaid carers for adults as well as children, although there is more variation in the caring roles of women and men when we look specifically at the care patterns in older years. Women are also more often the recipients of formal care services e.g. home care services, long stay residential care and day care services. This reflects in part the fact that women tend to live longer than men and require greater levels of care in later years.

Caring has a serious economic cost reducing the capacity of informal carers to participate in paid employment. Carers are often limited in the extent to which they can financially provide for themselves and their families given their role in caring for children and adult dependents. As women make up the majority of formal carers as childcare workers and as workers in other care services, the low pay and status of care work is a matter of some concern. The economic impact is both immediate in relation to current household income and has future impacts in relation to its impact on women's longer term earning and pension income potential.