

# Parents unaware of children's centre health services

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Children & Young People Now  
19 February 2009

Many parents are unaware of the health services provided by children's centres, according to research published by the government.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families [survey of parents](#) found that just 13 per cent had used health services in the three months prior to the survey. Just nine per cent had used family and parenting services.

However, the reach of children's centres was found to be good, with 78 per cent of parents and carers aware of their local centre and 45 per cent having used or attended their centre.

Children's minister Beverley Hughes said: "Parents are really pleased with the services they know about, but centres working with local health partners must do much more to promote the invaluable health services available to families across the country."

Dr Margy Whalley, director of the Pen Green Centre for Children and Families and chair of the Sure Start Children's Centres Reference Group, said: "These are exciting times to be working in children's centres.

"If they are to be the new frontier of the welfare state and education system then the challenge remains for children's centre workers to be even more responsive to local need and to develop differentiated approaches so that they can engage with minority groups."

The research was based on a survey of 1,496 parents and carers carried out between August and October last year. It was conducted in 120 areas in England.

The government also announced today that 17 local authorities have already completed the rollout of children's centres in their area ahead of the 2010 target to have 3,500 centres across England.