



Online vouchers preferred by all

Online childcare vouchers make life easier for thousands of working parents – as well as carers and childminders.

In a survey of over 5,000 working parents who use childcare vouchers by voucher provider Sodexo Pass, almost three quarters (73 per cent) said they chose to receive their vouchers electronically, largely because online vouchers are easy to use.

In addition, over a thousand carers were also surveyed by Sodexo Pass and the vast majority (86 per cent) revealed that they preferred to be paid with 'e-vouchers', mainly because they are easy to manage, reduce administration and don't require any action from the carers.

Although childcare vouchers can save working parents up to £1,195 a year, uptake has been slow since the scheme was introduced by the government in 2005. Previous research by Sodexo Pass has highlighted a perception that voucher schemes are difficult to manage, even though they can be set up in under 15 minutes.

Iain McMath, Managing Director of Sodexo Pass explains: "Many working parents have told us that the main reason they don't use childcare vouchers is because they think they're too much hassle. But the truth is voucher schemes are simple to set up and using e-vouchers means you can easily manage the whole thing online – as well as saving money on your childcare costs."

Childcare vouchers are exempt from Tax and National Insurance so allow parents to save money through what's known as a salary sacrifice scheme, where parents agree to 'sacrifice' part of their salary for childcare vouchers, but get an overall financial gain due to the Tax and National Insurance savings.

Parents who use Sodexo Pass e-vouchers have their own online account which they can use to pay their childcare costs. The secure online accounts allow parents to set-up direct e-voucher payments directly into their carer's bank account.

Joan Moody, a Human Resources Business Partner for technology company QinetiQ and mother of two, has found the e-vouchers to be very useful. "It's a bit like internet banking. The money gets paid in to my e-voucher account and then I've set up the system to automatically pay my carer. Because it's all online, you can check your account at any time and it's easy to make changes to payments, such as stopping them while the kids are at school."

However, as Iain McMath explains, while online vouchers can make managing your childcare cost a lot easier, Sodexo Pass still produces paper versions. "E-vouchers are a great way of paying for childcare but some people just prefer to do things the old fashioned way. That's why we also produce paper vouchers which parents can use to pay their carers in the same way they might use gift vouchers in shop."

