

Tories' childcare pledge in tatters as figures show drive to reform nursery system has been failure ^[1]

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EXCEPRTS

David Cameron's drive to reform the nursery system has been a pitiful failure, figures released by Labour show.

In the run-up to the election, then-PM Mr Cameron vowed to provide parents with 30 hours of free childcare a week .

But his plan has been derailed by nursery closures caused by cuts leading to 45,000 fewer places.

The worst-hit areas are some of the poorest.

Tulip Siddiq, Labour's Shadow Minister for Early Years, said: "The figures show just how empty the Government's promise was to millions of hard-working families who rely on nursery schools.

"Their election promise of 30 hours of free care lies in tatters. Cuts in funding mean we have fewer nursery places than we had in 2010 and it is only going to get worse."

Mrs Siddiq said Chancellor Philip Hammond should announce more money for nurseries in this month's Autumn Statement.

From September 2009 to December last year, 9,000 nurseries with 45,812 places closed. The South East and North West have each lost around 1,500 nurseries with up to 10,000 places. The West Midlands has lost 11,000 places.

Commons Library research shows there are now 400 state nursery schools - 29 fewer than at the start of 2010.

Research by school union NAHT and charity Early Education shows that hundreds more face closure.

In Birmingham, the funding cut will be close to 50 per cent.

Before last year's election, David Cameron promised to double the current 15 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds.

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