

Theresa May announces general election for 8 June ^[1]

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Source: Nursery World

Format: Article

Publication Date: 17 Apr 2017

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The snap election was announced by the Prime Minister outside Downing Street shortly after 11am.

Purnima Tanuku, chief executive of the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), said, 'This is the perfect opportunity for the new Government to take stock of the Conservative pledge to offer 30 hours free childcare to three- and four-year-olds which in its current state is undeliverable.

'This policy needs to be scrutinised and enough money invested to make it deliverable for nurseries and parents.'

Neil Leitch, chief executive of the Pre-school learning Alliance, said, 'This is a huge announcement which, despite being prompted by Brexit, is likely to have significant repercussions across all areas of Government policy, including the early years.

'Assuming a general election does go ahead, we urge all political parties to use this as an opportunity to develop a clear, evidence-based, sustainable approach to early years policy – one that puts quality, and the needs of the child, first.

'For far too long, childcare and early education has been used as a political football, with the sector constantly on the receiving end of un-costed, underfunded promises. We hope that such an approach will not be repeated in the run-up to 8 June.'

The promise of 30 hours of free childcare for working parents was a key Conservative pledge in their 2015 general election manifesto.

Liz Bayram, chief executive, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, said, 'Assuming the election goes ahead, PACEY hopes it isn't dominated by Brexit and that all political parties set out how they will support families to balance work and family life through high quality, affordable childcare.

'The current Government's commitment to support working families of three- and four-year-olds with 30 hours of funded childcare is a fantastic opportunity to deliver much needed practical support to more families – but only if it is funded properly now and in the future.'

Although the Prime Minister has named the date for the general election, she needs a two-thirds majority in the House of Commons to vote in favour in order to over-ride the Fixed-term Parliaments Act. That means 434 MPs need to vote in favour.

Currently the Conservatives have 330 MPs and Labour have 229 MPs - a total of 559 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has backed the snap election.

The Fixed-term Parliaments Act was introduced by the coalition Government and led to five-year fixed-term Parliaments with elections to be held on the first Thursday in May, starting in May 2015, then May 2020 and so on.

-reprinted from Nursery World

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