

Childcare problems are 'costing mums £3.4 million a day in lost earnings'^[1]

Save the Children is calling on the Government to fix the childcare issues parents are facing

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Childcare issues cost mums £3.4 million in lost earnings every day across England, according to research by Save the Children.

The study found that more than 45,000 mothers of children under five in the West Midlands are looking to get back into work or increase their hours.

But research shows that childcare issues are the number one barrier to work or parents with young children – due to costs, accessibility and the sheer complexity of working out benefits, hours and logistics around work.

Save the Children is calling on the Government ministers responsible for childcare to urgently set out the next steps to delivering a childcare system in England that is high quality, affordable, easy to use and fits around families' lives.

The charity is asking parents to sign a petition to let the Government know that reform is needed to fix the childcare system.

Birmingham mum Sarah Dowzell launched a similar petition last year - find out more about her campaign here.

"Mothers describe a childcare system that feels stacked against them," said Steven McIntosh, director of Save the Children's UK Poverty Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns.

"They tell us it's nightmare to navigate with barriers to work at every turn.

"The result is an astounding loss in earnings, hitting families already battling to make ends meet.

"The financial pressure and stress that creates at home is never good for parents or their children.

"It's time to make childcare work for families."

Almost half of parents say they have no idea or are confused about what support they should get, according to the study, and the results can tip families into hardship.

Dr Elizabeth Kilbey is an NHS consultant clinical psychologist and works on Channel 4's 'The Secret Life Of...' series as one of the experts watching and making sense of what we see the children doing, and what it all means.

She said: "I've seen first-hand the immense pressure serious money worries can put on young families.

"I've seen this lead to stress, depression and the breakup of relationships – everything you don't want a child growing up in.

"This can hit young children at this incredibly vital time of their lives.

"An effective childcare system would play a massive role in putting this right."

[Save the Children's childcare report infographic, "Estimates of mothers' likely lost earnings in the years leading up to school", available to view online]

Research shows the average take-home pay for a mum working full time is just over £20,000 and almost £45,000 for a couple both working full time.

Even taking into account free childcare hours and government subsidies, the cost of childcare for two children can still be more than £8,000 a year, according to the new 'Lost Opportunities, Lost Incomes' report by Save the Children.

That is 39 per cent of the mother's take home pay – twice as much as she pays in tax.

Parents say that childcare bills are still too high, with many claiming it costs more than their mortgage or rent, or that it doesn't make financial sense to go back to work.

A mother in an average family with young children could be losing between £3,400 and £11,400 a year because they can't get into work or aren't able to increase working hours.

-reprinted from Birmingham Mail

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