

# Essential but undervalued: Early years care & education during COVID-19 <sup>[1]</sup>



23 Feb 2022 - 11:00am to 12:00pm

**Event Website:** [Link to register](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

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**Contact email:** <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** International <sup>[4]</sup>

## Details

### About this event

Between March 2020 and June 2020, much of the early years sector (nurseries, childminders and nannies) closed to all but the children of key workers. Since then, intermittent closures or retraction of provision of nurseries and other settings has caused extensive disruption to parents who depend on care and education for pre-school children. This disruption has also been felt by those who staff the sector, who have experienced financial hardship and sometimes unsafe working conditions. The sector will play a key role in post-Covid recovery, as it is foundational to the economy and yet it is facing a recruitment and retention crisis after years of underfunding, exacerbated by the pandemic.

Leeds University Business School is delighted to invite you to this Ideas in Practice event which marks the conclusion of the project. In this webinar, the Childcare during COVID team launch its report 'Essential, but undervalued: early years staff and families during the COVID-19 pandemic' and discuss the challenges and opportunities for the future of early childhood education and care.

### Speakers include:

- Helen Hayes MP, Shadow Minister (Education)
- Dr Kate Hardy, Project PI, Associate Professor, Leeds University Business School
- Professor Jennifer Tomlinson, Project PI, Professor of Gender and Employment Relations, Leeds University Business School

This event will launch the final report from "Childcare during COVID-19" - a major study examining the effect of the pandemic on the early years sector, its workforce and the families who rely on it. Drawing on two waves of surveys with 5,542 responses and 321 interviews with 197 participants including nursery managers and workers, childminders, nannies, parents and grandparents. The findings demonstrate the financial pressures experienced within the sector, their uneven impact and the ways in which the pandemic has exacerbated existing intra- and inter-household inequalities. Findings include:

- Inequalities between households have been exacerbated, as children and parents in areas of greatest deprivation are more likely to be under threat of losing access to high-quality early childhood education and care
- Covid-19 has worsened long-term issues around affordability of ECEC and childcare for parents

- The workforce across the sector feel undervalued and unrecognized, leading to low morale, declining wellbeing and mental health as well as a care and brain drain
- Covid-related factors have widened the responsibilities of early years workers and intensified their work, worsening the retention and recruitment crisis
- Government guidance and support to the ECEC sector during COVID-19 was not fit for purpose, particularly for childminders and nannies
- Mothers have disproportionately felt the impact from the difficulty in accessing ECEC on their paid work and/or career progression
- Parents (and particularly mothers) report substantial and sustained negative impact on their well-being and mental health due to disruptions to formal and informal ECEC and childcare and wider family and community-based networks

The report concludes with a series of policy recommendations and interventions to ensure a more resilient future for this vital sector and its workforce, including:

- Formal designation of the workforce as 'critical workers'
- Business continuity payments through a viability support fund
- A need for enhanced access to sick pay for ECEC workers<sup>[2]</sup>
- Improvements to employment support schemes, which reflect the complexities of the workforce in ECEC
- Recruitment campaign and actions on low pay, low morale and recognition
- Creation of sustainable career paths in early years, with pay progression reflecting skills
- Supply-side core infrastructure for early years, including places for most deprived children and/or in areas of highest deprivation
- Existing 'Free entitlement' to be fully funded by government at actual cost for providers
- Investment in community-based provision for those who do not use ECEC settings, notably in deprived areas.

Research presentation and panel discussion will be followed by audience Q&A.

Research team: Dr Helen Norman, Dr Katie Cruz, Dr Xanthe Whittaker, Dr Nathan Archer; Dr Rose Smith; Dr Soumia Nouari; Bethan Starkey

**Tags:** workforce <sup>[5]</sup>  
recruitment and retention <sup>[6]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 9 Feb 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/resources/events/22/02/essential-undervalued-early-years-care-education-during-covid-19>

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/resources/events/22/02/essential-undervalued-early-years-care-education-during-covid-19> [2] [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/essential-but-undervalued-early-years-care-education-during-covid-19-tickets-264168443927?fbclid=IwAR3BOSaarTUQvr7I5TG\\_dKbN9qc3r0ixw\\_06y\\_M5-pK7AHI2THJy4B3-EI4](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/essential-but-undervalued-early-years-care-education-during-covid-19-tickets-264168443927?fbclid=IwAR3BOSaarTUQvr7I5TG_dKbN9qc3r0ixw_06y_M5-pK7AHI2THJy4B3-EI4) [3] <mailto:> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/international> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/workforce> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8982>