

# Childcare disaster is a result of government neglect<sup>[1]</sup>

Iram Siraj points to a lack of investment, Emanuele De Luca calls Liz Truss's proposed tax break an insult and Jol Miskin looks to Norway for answers

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**Source:** The Guardian

**Format:** Press release

**Publication Date:** 31 Jul 2022

## AVAILABILITY

Access online: <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS:

Your editorial (28 June) highlights the economic absurdity of current policy, but overlooks the economic case for investing in quality early learning.

I was an expert adviser to the select committee on children's centres when Liz Truss was undersecretary of state for childcare. Sadly, she did nothing to support this innovative service, which produced such excellent outcomes. I have provided evidence to several all-party parliamentary groups on early education and childcare, including the current one; yet the only changes in the last 12 years have been damaging deregulation, privatisation and profiteering.

It is unarguable that there are greater benefits to society from investment in early learning than from later investment. This is because the foundations for lifelong learning are laid in the first five years. This is when key areas of development mature at an astonishing rate.

Disadvantaged groups have even greater risks of poor health, social, emotional, behavioural, cognitive and language problems – which affect basic skills, employability, health, adjustment and criminality. Currently, 22% of UK children enter school with developmental problems, and so do not go on to achieve full functioning in society.

The rhetoric of governments that they want "high-quality, affordable childcare" is nonsense: no other sector of education is described in such an ignorant and irresponsible way. It is not possible to provide the quality of education and childcare needed in a modern nation with poorly paid, undervalued, low-qualified staff in an outsourced, profiteering, market-driven sector.

Iram Siraj

Professor of child development and education, University of Oxford

Prospective prime minister Liz Truss proposes to only help a parent with a tax break if he or she chooses to give up a career. This is an insult not only to parents who choose to not give up their professions, but to a modern society struggling to offer mothers a true choice between family and career.

It is true that the main political parties seem to have run out of ideas to tackle the British childcare disaster (the main article refers to England, but the disaster reverberates throughout the UK). But don't be fooled, these same parties know perfectly well what needs to be done to fix the childcare mess. They just choose every day not to act. They choose to force women out of flourishing professions. They choose to make the childcare sector a private equity jungle exploiting dedicated educators. And they choose to make children, the most wonderful creatures in the known universe, a private business, a heartbreaking economic choice.

Dr Emanuele De Luca

Glasgow

My son's son will go to his Oslo nursery in September. He will be there five days a week from 8am until 5pm and the monthly cost will be about £300. Yes £300. My daughter's daughters attend their nursery in Sheffield for two days a week. The monthly bill is about £1,000. So on a like-for-like basis, full-time for one child per month in Norway is £300 and in Sheffield it's about £1,200.

And that's just the start. In Norway, there must be one staff member for three children when the children are under three years of age. Qualifications are required for all staff and I've little doubt they are better paid than here and that they have the status such work deserves. Furthermore, the Norwegian system is specifically designed to create more gender equality. Not so here.

As with so many aspects of our lives today – social care, transport, social housing, education, etc – we need to "start all over". Profit shouldn't be the driver, need should be.

Jol Miskin

Sheffield

**Region:** International<sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** gender equity<sup>[4]</sup>

Source URL (modified on 2 Aug 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/08/childcare-disaster-result-government-neglect>  
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