

# Early education in Sweden – No comparison <sup>[1]</sup>

Should the former childcare minister have gone on a fact-finding mission to Sweden in his quest to lower childcare costs? No, for several reasons, says Professor Peter Moss

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online via Nursery World [free account registration] <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpts

Nursery World recently reported a visit to Sweden by England's then Children and Families Minister Will Quince in June. The visit was 'part of the Government's fact-finding mission to lower the cost of childcare'. The minister tweeted that 'I'm determined to tackle the cost and availability of childcare for working parents, which means improving our evidence about what works from our international neighbours.' I was left mystified.

In the first place, I couldn't understand 'the mission'. The cost of 'childcare' (and I'll return to why I've put that word in inverted commas) does not need lowering. It needs raising and raising substantially to tackle the scandal of a low-paid, low-qualified and low-status workforce, overwhelmingly women, who are part of a much larger marginalised 'care' workforce. The question then is not how to lower 'childcare' costs, but how to allocate higher costs between parents and government.

But I was even more mystified by the minister's visit to Sweden. He could, of course, have saved CO2 emissions by finding out all he needed to know from his desk in London; the Swedish early childhood system has been well documented for years by myself and others, and he could have put in a few video calls to Sweden. But above all, I could not understand what he hoped to learn about 'the cost of childcare' from Sweden. Because the point is, Sweden does not have 'childcare'. Let me explain.

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