

Affluent areas in England have ‘highest levels’ of childcare access – analysis ^[1]

Neighbourhoods with lower levels of childcare access were more likely to have a higher proportion of children living in poverty, figures suggest.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Affluent areas in England have the highest levels of childcare access, an analysis suggests.

Households in areas with greater access to registered childcare places tend to have higher disposable incomes, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Ofsted data.

The analysis found “wide variation” in the potential level of access to registered childcare places across local areas in England in 2023.

Affluent areas, like St Albans in Hertfordshire and Cambridge, had the most childcare places accessible per 100 children.

Meanwhile, the analysis found that Torridge in Devon and Walsall in the West Midlands had the least childcare places accessible per 100 children.

The analysis only includes Ofsted-registered childcare places at nurseries and other group settings, as well as childminders.

Childcare places which are school-based are not considered in the analysis, nor are children cared for informally by family members, like grandparents.

The analysis calculated access to childcare as an equivalent number of childcare places per 100 children aged 0 to 7 years, accessible from a neighbourhood.

Nearly all (nine out of 10) of the local authority areas with the highest number of childcare places relative to children had a higher than average gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head of the population.

In contrast, all the areas with the lowest levels of childcare access had a lower than average GDHI per head, with six out of 10 falling in the lowest 10% of local authorities, the analysis found.

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As part of a staggered rollout of the childcare policy, working parents of two-year-olds have been able to access 15 hours of funded childcare since April.

This will be extended to working parents of all children older than nine months from September this year, before the full rollout of 30 hours a week to all eligible families a year later.

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