

Blair pledges 'affordable' child care option for all [GB] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS Tony Blair pledged to extend child care provision today to make it an "affordable" option for all parents. The Prime Minister also said Labour would set up Sure Start children's centres in every community in Britain if re-elected for a third term. He promised "universal, affordable and flexible child care for the parents of all three to 14-year-olds who want it from 8am in the morning to 6pm at night". The charity Daycare Trust hailed Mr Blair's pledges to the Labour Party Conference as "just what millions of families have been waiting for". Stephen Burke, director of Daycare Trust, said the children's centres would "change lives". "Families want quality, affordable and flexible child care near where they live," he said. "Universal child care will help create opportunities for all families. "We look forward to the Government's ten year plan for child care, setting out how quality affordable child care for children of all ages will be funded and delivered with a well paid, well trained workforce. Earlier this month, the Daycare Trust released figures showing that a typical nursery place for a child under the age of two currently costs nearly £7,000 a year. The charity's study also found access to child care was "a lottery", with many families unable to find affordable nurseries where they live. Since 1997, hundreds of millions of pounds have been pumped into Sure Start and there are now more than 500 centres across the country. The flagship programme offers early learning education, child care facilities and family support in some of the poorest parts of Britain. - reprinted from the Scotsman

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