

# Postcode lottery 'depriving children pre-school care' [GB] <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** ePolitix.com

**Source:** ePolitix.com

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 7 Sep 2004

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## EXCERPTS:

A postcode lottery is leading to children missing out on vital pre-school education, a report by an influential Commons committee warned on Tuesday.

The public accounts committee welcomed the government's investment in early years learning, but warned that there are still many parents who cannot access or afford pre-school places, particularly in London.

The cross-party committee urged Department for Education ministers to develop their early years programmes for children from deprived backgrounds who live outside recognised disadvantaged areas.

Launching the report, committee chairman Edward Leigh said: "I welcome the progress that has been made in increasing the number of childcare and early education places available, with a net growth of 325,000 places by 2003.

"But I am very concerned that there still are many parents who cannot get, or afford, pre-school places for their children.

"London has the lowest levels of provision, and there are pockets of deprivation that lie outside the poorest areas being targeted by the education department."

The Tory MP continued: "The Department must also address the risk of neglecting some deprived areas, develop a specific strategy for London, and do more to support schools in expanding from nursery care to childcare."

The committee's report acknowledged that government spending on under four-year-olds has risen in real terms from £2 billion in 1997/98 to £3.6 billion in 2002/03, and that the department has a target to create a further 160,000 net places catering for 280,000 children by 2006.

A spokesman for the Department for Education and Skills said: "We welcome this report which acknowledges the progress that has been made in creating new childcare places. We will study the report and respond in due course."

- reprinted from ePolitix.com

**Region:** Europe <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[3]</sup>

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