

Childcare costs deprive millions [GB]^[1]

Children are missing out on early education 'because British parents have the highest nursery bills in Europe'

Author: Smithers, Rebecca

Source: The Guardian

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Jul 2001

AVAILABILITY

Text below

EXCERPTS:

Millions of children are missing out on the benefits of early education as the costs of childcare in Britain spiral out of control, according to a report published today.

British parents have the highest childcare bills in Europe, it reveals, with the typical cost of a full time nursery place for a two-year-old at 163;110 a week - more than & 163;5,700 a year and more than the average two adult household spends on housing or food. As a result, only 13% of parents with dependent children can afford to use formal childcare services all the time.

In some parts of the country, particularly London and the south-east, the cost of a nursery place is much higher - typically 163;135 a week or more than 163;7,000 a year, the report claims. Parents in inner London commonly pay at least 163;200 for a nursery place. Even the average weekly cost of a childminder is 163;90 a week

The report, *The Price Parents Pay*, is published by the childcare charity, the Daycare Trust and sponsored by BupaChildren@work. It shows that parents who do take up childcare foot three-quarters of the cost, with the government paying most of the rest and employers making a minimal contribution.

Even families on lower incomes who get help towards their childcare bill through the childcare tax credit still have to find 30% of the cost of childcare. The average award through the childcare tax credit of 163;35.10 a week is less than a third of the typical cost of a nursery place.

But the majority of families where the adults are not in work get no help at all, it is claimed. Three million children live in families where there is no working adult but only 20,000 children can access services funded by their local authority.

Since Labour launched its national childcare strategy in 1998, investment in childcare has grown substantially, the report acknowledges. Last week, for example, the government announced 45,000 new places in "neighbourhood nurseries" in deprived areas.

But it argues that its impact is weakened by a hotpotch of over 55 different funding streams which make planning new childcare provision very complex. The trust urges the government to deliver more affordable childcare and increase public investment as well as simplifying funding.

Stephen Burke, director of Daycare Trust, said: "British parents face the highest childcare bills in Europe. That means many families simply can't afford to use quality childcare. Children are missing out on early learning and parents are trapped in a low pay/no pay cycle.

"With a quarter of children growing up in workless families, childcare is key to tackling child poverty and helping parents to work, learn and boost family income.

"Childcare and early education are a public good, with great benefits for society as well as individual families. Childcare is a crucial part of the local community like schools and hospitals and needs much greater long term government funding. Without childcare, many families will not achieve their full potential."

A spokesman for the Department for Education and Skills said: "The government recognises that there are problems with the number of different funding options, and is already taking steps to try to simplify and clarify the system.

"The working families' tax credit has made a difference. More than 128,000 families have taken advantage of it, compared with just 47,000 families who used the old family credit".

- Reprinted from The Guardian.

Region: Europe^[2]

Tags: poverty^[3]

affordability^[4]

quality^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/01/07/childcare-costs-deprive-millions-gb>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/01/07/childcare-costs-deprive-millions-gb> [2]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/poverty> [4]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [6]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility>