

Choice for parents, the best start for children: A ten year strategy for child care ^[1]

Pre-budget report

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AVAILABILITY

Report in pdf ^[2]

Summary:

Choice and flexibility: parents to have greater choice about balancing work and family life:

- a goal of twelve months paid maternity leave by the end of the next Parliament. As a first step this Pre-Budget Report announces the extension of the entitlement to nine months from April 2007;
- legislation to give mothers the right to transfer a proportion of this paid leave to the child's father by the end of the next Parliament; and
- every family to have easy access to integrated services through Children's Centres in their local community, offering information, health, family support, child care and other services for parents and children. 2,500 Children's Centres will be in place by 2008 and 3,500 by 2010.

Availability: for all families with children aged up to 14 who need it, an affordable, flexible, high quality child care place that meets their circumstances:

- legislation for a new duty on local authorities in place by 2008 so that over time they will secure sufficient supply to meet the needs of families;
- a goal of 20 hours a week of free high quality care for 38 weeks for all 3 and 4 year olds with this Pre-Budget Report announcing a first step of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year reaching all children by 2010; and
- an out of school child care place for all children aged 3-14 between the hours of 8am to 6pm each weekday by 2010.

Quality: high quality provision with a highly skilled child care and early years workforce, among the best in the world:

- all full daycare settings to be professionally led;
- this Pre-Budget Report announces a Transformation Fund of £125 million each year from April 2006 to invest in high quality, sustainable, affordable provision;
- radical reform of the workforce, with the Children's Workforce Development Council consulting on a new qualification and career structure in 2005; and
- reform of the regulation and inspection regime to improve standards and to give parents better information.

Affordability: families to be able to afford flexible, high quality child care that is appropriate for their needs:

- this Pre-Budget Report announces an increase in the limits of the child care element of the Working Tax Credit to £300 a week (£175 for one child) from April 2005, and an increase in the maximum proportion of costs that can be claimed from 70 per cent to 80 per cent from April 2006;
- for a couple family on £34,000 a year with both parents working and typical child care costs for two young children, these reforms reduce the proportion of child care costs they pay from 85 per cent to 75 per cent, a saving to them of £700 per year. Building on this first step, the Government's long-term ambition is to reduce further the proportion of child care costs paid by such families, making child care increasingly affordable; and
- this Pre-Budget Report also announces £5 million from April 2006 for a pilot to work with the Greater London Authority to address child care affordability issues in London.

Related link: Chancellor announces extra child care cash ^[3]

Region: Europe ^[4]

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