

Child care and child poverty ^[1]

Briefing paper

Author: End Child Poverty & Daycare Trust

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AVAILABILITY

Full brief in pdf ^[2]

Press release from End Child Poverty ^[3]

Excerpts from the briefing paper:

The Government has made progress in reducing the number of children in poverty since 1999, but child poverty policies have so far been focussed on increasing household income. There is no national strategy to end child poverty that comprises both income maximization and the provision of public services. Universal provision of child care and early years services represents a cornerstone for the success of the government's anti-poverty agenda. As a public service for children and young people, their families and the wider community, it plays a central part in reducing child poverty.

If the government is serious in its ambition to create children centres that, in the words of Gordon Brown, "...can become & for parents as well as children & as much a focus of community life as the local school, the local place of worship and the local park", it will need to move away from a targeted approach and commit to a universal model of integrated child care and early years services with a clear timetable for achieving it.

Policies aimed at realizing a child care and early years provision system that responds to the needs of children, families and communities need to:

- Extend funding beyond the 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas where most Government funding is currently targeted in order to reach the 46 per cent of children in poverty who live outside such areas.
- Increase the effectiveness of the tax credit system as a tool for funding child care and allowing more parents back to work. The maximum which can be claimed by families with two or more children needing childcare must be increased, as must the percentage of child care costs covered by the tax credit. Moreover, the hours a second earner in a couple needs to work to qualify for the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit need to be reduced.
- Make child care more accessible to all parents and children. Supply needs to meet parents' demands for more flexibility, quality and affordability.
- Ensure a truly diverse child care workforce to reach men, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities to encourage them into the childcare workforce.
- Deliver children's centres, providing integrated services which combine care and education, health and family support in each and every community in order to reach all families. Children's centres within reach and that respond to the real needs of children and families would provide the support that most parents describe as their ideal child care and would make a considerable contribution to reducing child poverty by helping parents entering the workplace and by enhancing children's development. End Child Poverty and Daycare Trust calculate that between £4 billion and £6 billion would be needed to provide a children's centre in every community.

Related link: Press release from Daycare Trust ^[4]

Region: Europe ^[5]

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