

Making the case for universal child care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Abstract:

This paper makes the economic case for universal childcare for preschool-aged children. High-quality early years provision delivers a net financial return to the Treasury as well as delivering better outcomes for children, families and society. We therefore argue that the provision of universal childcare should be a strategic priority for public service and welfare reform in the UK. On the basis of new cost-benefit analysis, we show that universal childcare pays a return to the government of £20,050 (over four years) in terms of tax revenue minus the cost of childcare for every woman who returns to full-time employment after one year of maternity leave. Universal provision can also enable families to better balance work and caring responsibilities and, in so doing, help to promote higher employment rates and reduce gender inequalities. Universal early years provision is a key foundation of policy frameworks for achieving social justice more widely.

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