

Tackling childcare affordability in London ^[1]

Author: London Assembly, Health and Public Services Committee

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AVAILABILITY

Report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the executive summary:

The exceptionally high cost of childcare in the capital is a major barrier to employment. Childcare costs up to a third more in London than the rest of the country, but Londoners do not get extra financial support to help cover these higher costs. People in London tend to work longer hours and have longer commutes than people elsewhere. This means that they tend to need more hours of childcare, often outside standard hours, which increases their childcare costs further. In addition, Londoners tend to have less access to relatives who can help reduce the cost of childcare. All of these interrelated factors lead to a situation where many parents on low to middle incomes find that working is simply unaffordable. As a consequence, London has the lowest level of maternal employment in the country. Just over half of London mothers with dependent children work compared to almost two thirds across the UK.

...

This report sets out the Committee's findings about the barriers Londoners face in affording childcare; reviews the government's role in improving access to childcare, and puts forward proposals as to what more can be done to support families across all income levels. Tackling childcare affordability is an urgent priority, as childcare costs and other household bills continue to rise and more and more families struggle to make ends meet.

The Committee found that there is scope for all levels of government to do more to make quality childcare more affordable in London. Central government provides financial support to help families afford childcare, but changes are needed to ensure Londoners get as much benefit from this support as others. The Mayor could play a useful role in researching what could be done to improve access to early education in the capital, and promoting the use of childcare vouchers as a way for parents at all income levels to reduce their childcare costs. Local government is responsible for ensuring sufficient provision of childcare to meet local needs, but financial retrenchment could mean there is a risk of cuts to the amount of affordable childcare available in the capital. Work to mitigate these risks is therefore crucial.

Related link: Childcare allowance 'fails to address regional differences' ^[3]

Region: Europe ^[4]

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