

# Soaring cost of Scottish childcare <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Childcare costs in Scotland are among the highest in Britain, with some families paying nearly as much as those in Southern England, according to new research. The report, 'Scottish Childcare Lottery', by the Daycare Trust and Children in Scotland, based on a survey of Children's Information Services, highlights parents' struggle in finding childcare.

It shows that parents face a postcode lottery, with a greater variation in childcare costs between different areas in Scotland than in any other part of Britain.

The average cost of childcare in Scotland, based on 25 hours over 50 weeks of the year, is £101.49 for a child under two-years-old and £94.52 for a child over two.

For the same amount of care in Scotland's most expensive nursery it would cost £11,688.

Out-of-school care is also more expensive in Scotland than in England and Wales, with an average price of £49 for 15 hours. In the most expensive local authority out-of-school care is 94 per cent more expensive than in the area with the lowest costs.

The research also highlighted a lack of availability of childcare across Scotland, with only a fifth of local authorities reporting that they have enough childcare for parents working full-time.

Just one in ten has enough childcare places for parents who work outside normal office hours or who live in rural areas.

The Daycare Trust and Children in Scotland make a number of recommendations to the Scottish Government, including to:

- take the lead on implementation of the Early Years Framework by legislating for an entitlement to a place in early childhood education and care, and/or out-of-school care for all babies and children, to be introduced across the nation in phases.
- make it a requirement that local authorities gather better data on the supply, quality and marketing of childcare provision locally, through regular surveys and public reporting in line with the Early Years Framework.
- introduce, in phases, a charging policy for childcare that caps the financial contribution of parents on an equitable basis, as currently exists and works in other countries.
- introduce, as part of a charging policy, income-related charges that fits together with and enhances the fairness of the Tax Credit system.
- put pressure on the Westminster government to amend regulations to ensure that self-employed parents can claim childcare vouchers.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said, 'High quality, accessible, affordable childcare is essential for Scottish families, who are paying among the highest childcare costs in the UK and indeed Europe - and also still lack the systematic provision to extend programmes for children under two and out of school wrap-around care

'Childcare is not just about enabling parents to work or study - the long term benefits to children of social, learning, development and play opportunities that may not be available elsewhere are well documented. A universal entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care, with subsidies to limit what parents pay themselves, would make the benefits of early learning available to every child.

'We are pleased to learn the Scottish government is joining representatives of other EU member states to look at how to implement the findings of the European Commission's Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care, which will help Scotland's childcare system 'match the best in Europe' - the pledge made by the Scottish Government before the election in 2011.'

- reprinted from Nursery World

**Related link:** Briefing Paper: Key findings from The Scottish Childcare Lottery: A Report on Childcare Costs and Supply in Scotland <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[4]</sup>

accessibility <sup>[5]</sup>

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