

# Crippling cost of childcare 'stops thousands from going to work' <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Unaffordable childcare costs in the capital are preventing thousands of single parents on the breadline from working, a report warns today.

Lone mothers find it toughest when faced with fees of up to nearly £120 a week for childminders or nursery care, according to new research.

The findings, by the Centre for London, reveal that there are 135,000 jobless single parents living in council or housing association homes in the capital.

The majority of social landlords do fund schemes to get people back into work. But the report warns that landlords often overlook the fact that parents need childcare if they are working.

It recommends that these landlords should set up nurseries to help those who want to work. Single parents head about a third of all council and housing association households in the capital, and only one in three of these works.

More than nine in 10 of all social tenants who are single parents are mothers. They are faced with paying an average of £119 a week for childcare for a child under two. This is a third more expensive than elsewhere in the UK.

Ben Rogers, director of the Centre for London, said that a well-paid job was the best route out of poverty, but childcare costs were a barrier to parents working.

He added: "London has a very large number of parents - especially single parents - in social housing who don't work. This is in part because of the very high costs of childcare in the capital, which have got higher over the last few years.

"Social landlords should explore ways of helping their tenants by, for instance, running nurseries and youth clubs from their own premises."

Chancellor George Osborne was accused of failing single parents by not providing extra help with childcare costs in his Autumn Statement.

Fiona Weir, chief executive of Gingerbread, which represents lone parents, said: "The Chancellor's announcement of a real-terms cut to in- and out-of-work benefits will hit families hard, not just for the next year, but for the next three years.

"Key to cutting the welfare bill is supporting more people into work and yet the Chancellor has failed to give any extra help with childcare costs, which remain one of the biggest barriers to work for parents.

"Instead childcare costs will rise even further out of single parents' reach. As living costs continue to rise many single parents are already at breaking point, unable to buy the decent food their children need and afraid to heat their homes.

"The Chancellor's decisions today will push thousands more into poverty."

Landlords need to help mothers

Single mother Janet Lewis, 49, lives in a housing association flat in Hackney with her daughter Zenobia, eight. She would like to work with children with disabilities.

Ms Lewis, who worked with elderly people before having Zenobia, said: "It would be difficult to get back in time to pick her up from school every day especially if I had to travel back from a job. It would mean finding a childminder I could trust and afford.

"It wouldn't be worth it by the time I'd paid for someone plus the cost of travel. Landlords should do more to help because there are lots of mothers like me. I don't sit in front of the TV all day: I'm up making sure my daughter gets to school and gets a meal in the evening. There is only me to look after her unless I had support."

-reprinted from the London Evening Standard

**Related link:** [We can work it out: Parental employment in London](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

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