

# Childcare costs soar by 19% in just one year – survey <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

The cost of childcare in Britain has soared by 19% over the past year, according to research given exclusively to the Observer, which also found that a quarter of unemployed parents want to return to work but cannot afford to have their children looked after.

Findababysitter.com, a childcare search website, said parents were struggling with returning to work because of the availability and cost of childcare, which often amounted to a "second mortgage".

Half of parents surveyed thought the government was not doing enough to support them when it came to childcare, although this figure was a 7% fall on last year, which the site puts down to proposals by the major parties ahead of the next election to tackle the issue.

On average, 24% of unemployed parents said they would prefer to work - this rises to 38% among 18-24-year-olds - but were unable to do so because of the cost of childcare. The top five cities where parents would work if they could afford childcare are Birmingham, Bristol, Oxford, London and Leeds.

The impact, said Siobhan Freegard, founder of the parenting website Netmums, was a "triple whammy": keeping unemployed parents on benefits; preventing mothers from climbing the career ladder; and holding back economic recovery by keeping willing workers out of the workforce.

Tom Harrow, founder of findababysitter.com, said: "We're starting to hear from the major parties, who say they have policies to help parents with this cost, but the issue is whether this will provide help where it's needed.

"From our experience, it entirely depends at present on what's on offer in your area, and the government needs to consider the reality that families face."

The site's analysis of 231,000 childcare professionals listing their services showed sharp rises in the hourly fees charged across all types of care, from nannies to babysitters. Among nannies, charges had gone up by 25% over the year, to an average of £8.75 an hour.

The 1,000 parents questioned were asked to rank barriers to getting childcare from one to five, and cost was their main concern, followed by safety, location and availability. Only 3.9% of parents ranked the guilt of leaving their children to be cared for by others as their greatest concern.

According to a YouGov poll commissioned by charity 4Children for its report Making Britain Great for Children and Families, around a quarter of parents think having more affordable, flexible or accessible childcare would make the biggest improvement to family life. Only around 30% of parents think current childcare options are family-friendly, mainly because they are not flexible enough.

The research backs the findings of the Family and Childcare Trust 2013 survey, which showed the cost of childcare rocketing by 77% over the past decade, while wages have been stagnant in real terms over the same period. And a 2013 Family Finances report from insurer Aviva found childcare costs and cuts to benefits have led to more people in "pay-neutral" work - where childcare and travel costs wipe out earnings. Many single parents are forced to take part-time jobs to fit around their children.

The Resolution Foundation said that for a couple both on the average wage with two children, aged two and four, in full-time care, the proportion of disposable income spent on childcare (after the cost of housing) now stands at 40%. A survey conducted by the Resolution Foundation and Mumsnet to be published later this month will show that the cost of childcare is the single biggest factor that stops women working more, with four in 10 mothers saying it is the biggest consideration.

Childcare is back in the spotlight amid the cost of living crisis. Ahead of the next election, there is a pledge of tax-free childcare from the Conservatives, and an expansion of free provision to 25 hours for three- and four-year-olds from Labour alongside a legal guarantee of wraparound childcare before and after school. Yet charities say there is a gap between the focus of political policies, and the problems faced by parents today.

"Finding affordable, flexible and high-quality childcare is still - and will remain for the foreseeable future - one of the biggest challenges faced by families," said Anand ShulkaShukla, chief executive of the Family and Childcare Trust.

Since 2006, it has been a legal duty for English and Welsh local authorities to ensure there is sufficient childcare for working parents, and yet many parents struggle to access this, added ShulkaShukla. "Parents of school-aged children and parents working atypical hours often have the greatest difficulties," he said.

The current options to help families, including tax credits, 15 hours of free childcare for three- and four-year-olds, and the employer's childcare voucher, are complicated and inefficient, he added.

-reprinted from the Guardian

**Region:** Europe <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[3]</sup>

gender <sup>[4]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/01/childcare-costs-soar-19-just-one-year-%E2%80%93-survey>

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