

# Childcare costs are a national scandal - and it is sending working mums into the black market <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

So the cost of part-time childcare is **more than most families' mortgages** <sup>[2]</sup>.

That will come as no surprise to any parent who has stared forlornly at their bank statement each month when the nursery fees have been deducted and thought "there are so many other things we could have done with that money".

The cost of childcare in the UK is nothing short of a national scandal.

Thousands of mothers are priced out of the jobs market every year because when they do the sums the extortionate cost of sending their kids to nursery means it just doesn't make financial sense for them to go back to work once their maternity leave is over.

I was no exception. When my first child was born I had a good job on the local paper and could just about afford to return to my job and send her to nursery.

But when baby number two came along less than two years later my husband and I realised things weren't going to work.

The cost of sending two kids to nursery would mean I would be handing over most of my hard-earned wage to childcare.

I worked out it cost more to send my children to nursery three days a week than it would cost to send them to private school full-time once they reached the age of four. It just didn't make sense.

I had no option but to take voluntary redundancy from the job I loved and work from home as a freelance.

That meant my eldest daughter would still go to nursery while the baby would stay at home with me and I would have to juggle my working hours around her.

This often meant I would start to write once the girls were in bed, and work into the early hours and then have to get up in the night with a baby.

But I was one of the lucky ones. Being a journalist meant my job was flexible and I could work from home.

Many of my friends had to give up their hard-won careers altogether.

These were highly-educated, intelligent, professional women working as teachers, lawyers, police officers, air stewardesses.

They were providing a vital contribution to society, yet once they had kids they had no choice but to swap their careers for coffee mornings and baby massage as the childcare costs meant there would be no cash left over at the end of the month once they had paid for the privilege of nursery so they could go back to work.

Not only is the cost of childcare robbing society of the valuable contribution these women make, it is also fuelling the black market.

What is a hairdresser or beauty therapist to do when the cost of sending her kids to nursery is more than her wage?

She goes mobile and works evenings and weekends for cash in hand of course. And who can blame her?

Many parents are now forced to base their family planning around the cost of childcare.

Gone are the days when parents chose a nice two-year age gap between their kids.

Now many of them have to wait until the eldest child is at school before they can afford to have child number two so they aren't forking out for two sets of nursery fees.

Most mums I know want to work.

They want to continue with the careers they have worked hard for.

They want to earn their own money.

They want to set a good work ethic for their children.

They want their children to benefit from early years education and socialising with other kids.

But the spiralling cost of childcare means that they often have no choice but to stay at home.

And in the long run that is robbing the country of a highly-skilled and productive workforce and the taxes they would contribute.

After all, if you want something doing well, you ask a busy mum. She'll get it done in no time.

And that is something the government appears to have forgotten.

- reprinted from the Mirror

**Related link:** 2014 UK annual childcare costs survey <sup>[2]</sup>

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

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

mother's labour force participation <sup>[5]</sup>

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