

# World class: What does international evidence tell us about improving quality, access and affordability in the English childcare market? <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** Resolution Foundation

**Format:** Report

**Publication Date:** 28 Aug 2014

## AVAILABILITY

Full report pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

## Description:

A new Resolution Foundation report by leading childcare experts, Kitty Stewart of the LSE and Ludovica Gambaro of the Institute of Education, sets out a path for reform for the UK, offering the best ideas from abroad. Central to getting greater value for the £5.5 billion we already invest in childcare as well as future investment is to do what other countries do better and attach tighter strings to public funding.

## Key Findings

- Considerable progress has been made in expanding access to early education and childcare over the last decade. One million new places have been created and the near universal take up of the free entitlement for three and four year olds is a remarkable achievement, ensuring that those families who were least likely to use ECEC services now have access. However, not enough progress has been made in improving the quality of provision, with the risk that the beneficial impacts of our investment on child development will not be realised.

## Recommendations

- In the run up to the next election, it is critical that further attention is paid to ensuring that the investment we are making in childcare delivers for children as well as for working parents. We need to focus on improving quality at the same time as affordability and access, and work with the mixed economy we have. It is tempting to argue for different choices to have been made a decade ago but in reality, we are unlikely to remake the system we have from scratch.
- Looking at the way in which other countries with similarly mixed systems of ECEC negotiate the tensions inherent in the childcare triangle reveals the need to shift towards a system of funding and support that requires more in return for the receipt of public funding and simultaneously offers more support for providers to meet these new requirements. Public funding should come with 'strings attached,' notably around improvements in staff qualifications, but the state will have to invest to ensure that the sector can raise its game for the benefit of children and families.

**Related link:** Childcare is a new election battleground, so why do none of the parties get it? <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[4]</sup>

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