

# Families and paying for childcare <sup>[1]</sup>

Letter to the editor

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## AVAILABILITY

Read online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The Irish Times reported on a proposal submitted to Cabinet by Minister for Children Katherine Zappone involving the State paying a portion of a family's bills directly to childcare providers, through a means-tested scheme that could be rolled out over a number of years, starting with lower-income families ("State considers radical plan to help pay for childcare", September 16th).

We are assuming that this threshold figure of €47,000 per couple to qualify is a net figure, and even so it needs to be increased by at least 20 per cent if we are to cover our "squeezed middle".

The Iona Institute quickly reminded us of the needs of stay-at-home parents. However, we must recognise all of the groups here – those who want to stay at home, those who want to return to work, those who have to return to work and those who have to stay at home due to the cost of childcare – if we are to debate this proposal properly.

The voice of parents must be heard in these discussions, and that must mean all parents. Regulated full-time or part-time childcare is simply not an option now for many parents because they cannot afford it.

A scheme to suit the needs of all families needs to be complex, but we must resist pitting stay-at-home parents against working parents, and in the process scaring the Government into doing nothing about this proposal for fear of disturbing the status quo.

To work, this scheme requires the engagement of childcare providers, and so they must be afforded scope for consultation.

It must recognise and reward the job done by early childhood carers and educators, a profession that must be attractive enough to recruit and retain people to deliver good experiences for children. Childminders must be brought into the system, and this in turn will encourage more of them to register and be regulated. This is the moment that the Government must grasp, the moment it can become a "good Government", by doing something that will make a real difference for all parents. Let's hope it does and gives parents a real choice in childcare on budget night. – Yours, etc,

*Teresa Heeney, Chief Executive Officer, Early Childhood Ireland*

-reprinted from Irish Times

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

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

access <sup>[5]</sup>

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