

UK childcare is the most expensive in the world: Families now spend a third of their income on nurseries and childminders ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Childcare costs in Britain are by far the highest in the Western world, an international study has found.

Couples spend more than a third of their income on nurseries and childminders in the UK – more than three times the cost in France and Germany.

A full-time nursery place for a child under two costs £222 a week, up by a third in six years. It means working mothers now have to spend £11,300 a year on average on childcare, and up to £15,700 in London.

Charities say the 'eye-watering' costs are down to the fact that the Government targets state help for childcare towards those on lower incomes, pushing up costs for the middle classes.

Critics warn that the true cost of the trend to having two working parents is not the financial one, but the emotional and developmental cost for children who grow up without their mother at home.

From 2017 all but the wealthiest parents will get 30 hours of free childcare a week for children aged three and four, double the present entitlement. But there will still be no help for most families for children under that age.

The study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a group of 35 industrialised nations, found that just short of 34 per cent of a British couple's net income goes towards the cost of childcare.

This is higher than every other country in Europe and the rest of the Western world – and has grown worse since the 33 per cent figure recorded six years ago.

Across the nations of the OECD, the average childcare cost for two-parent households is 13 per cent of income. Parents in France and Germany pay less than 10 per cent of net income.

Costs tend to be higher in English-speaking nations. New Zealand is second on the league table with a 29 per cent cost, followed by Ireland on 27 per cent and the US on 26 per cent.

European countries are lower on the list because they tend to provide much more funding for childcare to allow mothers to continue to work.

The most recent figures show that in the UK, the average cost of an under-two's nursery place for 50 hours a week is £217.57, and the average cost of a childminder for 50 hours is £202.22.

The OECD report, *Society At A Glance 2016*, states: 'Such high costs are a strong deterrent to employment. It may not be financially worthwhile for both partners to work, and it is usually the mother who stays at home.'

Megan Jarvie of the Family and Childcare Trust said: 'The UK's eye-watering childcare costs can cause a barrier to work for parents, particularly mothers.'

She welcomed the forthcoming 30 hours of free childcare, but added: 'Further reform is needed.'

-reprinted from Daily Mail

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