

PE2112/E: Conduct an independent review of childcare costs and availability in Scotland

Petitioner written submission, 21 October 2024

Following news that parents were sending unsolicited correspondence to the petitions committee in support of this petition. The charity Pregnant Then Screwed put out a call for parents to answer the following question

"Please tell us how the childcare system in Scotland meets or fails to meet the needs of your family"

The case study capture form was open between October 8th and 21st 2024 and received 84 submissions who opted in to their experiences being shared with the petitions committee.

98.8% of the submissions detailed negative experiences of the childcare system. 53 (63%) of the submissions detailed issues with availability and 56 (66.6%) of the submissions detailed issues with affordability. Other key themes included issues with council boundary changes, parents having to reduce their hours at work due to a lack of childcare availability and inflexibility of the current system.

We have included the following excerpts as an example of these experiences.

Case Study 1 - Gemma

"The system is failing my family as we require a place in a private nursery for my daughter due to lack of family support and the council nursery times do not suit families with 2 parents working full time. I am still unable to find a suitable place in a nursery within Midlothian that allows both me and my partner to work full time.

On top of this, we are being punished by Edinburgh council for using their private nurseries as anyone living out with Edinburgh won't have access to the free funding at the age of 3 unless it is in a council setting. The council is punishing working parents who travel into Edinburgh for their job which has now had a knock-on effect as those kids out of Edinburgh have shifted nurseries and have taken up more spaces than normal within the Lothians and other areas.

As working parents, we are entitled to the free funding, and it is up to parliament and the councils to ensure my child has access to this as we get little support from the government as it is. The money comes out of the same pot for funding, so it is a clear push from the ECC to push children into council nurseries (which again do not suit those working full time without other support systems)."

Case Study 2 - Rosie

"There is nowhere near enough local provision. We live in the Scottish Borders and there is only one nursery within 10 miles which offers space for babies under 2 years old. And there are only 6 spaces available per day in the baby room there.

For my first child (now 2.5), I signed her up for the waiting list there at 20 weeks pregnant and didn't get a full-time place until she was 18 months old despite me

needing to go back to work after 9 months because we couldn't afford unpaid leave. We had to find alternative provision for her and ended up with a mish mash of 2 days with a childminder and 3 at a nursery in Edinburgh. The nursery then unexpectedly closed their baby room after 3 months of her being there."

Case Study 3 - Irantzu

"It has failed for me. At £71 a day, I had to ask the bank for a loan in order to afford it so I could go back to work."

Case Study 5 - Collette

"We registered our son for a nursery place in April 2021, the month he was born, so it would be available 1 year later when I returned to work. The place didn't become available until August 2022."

Case Study 6 - Kirsty

"My husband and I make around 80k per annum between us however our nursery fees (along with other increased costs), have put us in debt with the debt increasing every month. We are seriously considering me giving up work as we feel that we would be financially better off on one salary and not have to pay nursery fees.

We are fortunate to access tax free childcare however it is not touching the sides for our financial situation. If the Scottish Government could support nurseries and families with affordable childcare, it would without doubt pay dividends by the drastic increase in females returning to the workplace to enjoy prosperous careers that will contribute to wider society."

Case Study 7 - Anon

"The childcare system in Scotland, while offering some support, largely fails to meet the needs of my family, particularly due to the high cost of childcare for children under three. There is virtually no financial assistance before a child turns three, and this has been a major strain on us. My child just turned three in September, but I won't receive the 1,140 funded hours until January, leaving us with an extended period of paying full costs.

For a long time, my family has been paying more for childcare than we pay for rent and in Edinburgh, rents are already extraordinarily high. I find it outrageous that families are left in such an unsustainable position."