

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

Scottish Private Nursery Association written submission, 9 December 2024

I am writing to express my strong support for the petition calling for action to address the critical issues surrounding affordable childcare in Scotland. Access to affordable and quality childcare is not just a family concern but a societal and economic priority. It is vital for enabling working parents and students to achieve their professional and educational goals while ensuring their children receive high-quality care and education.

The failure of some local councils to pass the full funding for 1140 hours of free childcare onto providers is placing immense strain on nurseries. These nurseries are left with no choice but to increase their fees to cover the shortfall. Compounded by the rising costs associated with increases in the National Minimum Wage, National Insurance contributions, and upcoming statutory sick pay changes, many nurseries are struggling to remain viable.

This has a cascading effect on families, especially those from lower-income households, who are already grappling with the cost-of-living crisis. Increased nursery fees risk excluding these families from access to affordable childcare, forcing many parents to reduce their working hours or abandon their jobs altogether. Similarly, students relying on childcare support to complete their studies face insurmountable barriers to progressing their education and improving their futures.

Ensuring that providers receive adequate funding for the 1140 hours entitlement is essential. This would enable nurseries to manage operational costs without overburdening families. Without urgent intervention, the continued financial pressure on nurseries could lead to closures, further reducing the availability of childcare and increasing the crisis.

I urge policymakers to recognise the fundamental role that childcare plays in Scotland's economic and social fabric. Prioritising adequate funding for providers is not merely an expenditure but an investment in the well-being of children, the empowerment of families, and the future prosperity of our communities.

This approach aligns with the Scottish Government's commitment to children and young people, as well as its dedication to building a successful economy.

By addressing these challenges and ensuring that the full funding for the 1140 hours entitlement reaches providers, we can secure a brighter and more equitable future for Scotland's families and children.

Thank you for considering this matter with the urgency it deserves.