

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

Liam McArthur MSP written submission, 24 February 2025

I am writing to you with reference to petition PE2112: Conduct an independent review of childcare costs and availability in Scotland, which is currently under consideration.

As I understand, the petition was created by the organisation Pregnant then Screwed (PTS), who have conducted research into the financial implications of childcare for families in Scotland, finding that for an overwhelming majority, the cost of childcare meets or surpasses their total income, making working financially unviable. PTS are calling for a national inquiry into the state of early learning and childcare provision in Scotland to better understand how we can address issues of accessibility.

I know that accessibility to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is a problem of particular significance in my own constituency, where I have received large volumes of casework correspondence from families who are faced with considerable difficulties in arranging childcare. Many have communicated to me that it would make no financial sense for them to return to work, whilst those who do wish to make a return to work find that there are no available nursery spaces, and provision of childminding facilities is similarly scarce.

A lot of these issues, which I know are also being experienced to varying degrees across the country, are further exacerbated for those living in island communities. Many nurseries in Orkney are restricted in their capacity to offer childcare support, often as a consequence of issues around staff recruitment and retention.

A national inquiry into the cost and availability of childcare as proposed by this petition might provide a valuable opportunity to identify these key areas of difficulty for childcare providers and parents, and to review the current approach, which evidently is not working for families.

I would be grateful if the Committee could keep me updated on its work with regards to this petition, and if it might consider the points made in reference to my own constituency and island communities more broadly.