

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 30 October 2024
16th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

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

Introduction

Petitioner Carole Erskine on behalf of Pregnant Then Screwed

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to commission an independent review of publicly-funded early learning and childcare in Scotland, in order to better understand and address the challenges families face when trying to secure and afford childcare.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2112>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 23 July 2024.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 3,129 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received submissions from the Scottish Government, the Petitioner, the University of the West of Scotland, and Tim Eagle MSP, which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerks to the Committee
October 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

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

Petitioner

Carole Erskine on behalf of Pregnant Then Screwed

Date Lodged

23 July 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to commission an independent review of publicly-funded early learning and childcare in Scotland, in order to better understand and address the challenges families face when trying to secure and afford childcare.

Background information

The charity, Pregnant Then Screwed, conducted a survey looking at childcare in Scotland. Over 2600 parents responded, with 83.7% of parents saying their childcare costs are the same or more than their income. 71% of mothers, and 50% of fathers, say it doesn't make financial sense for them to work. Our survey also found that 4 in 10 women in Scotland who have terminated a pregnancy say the cost of childcare was the primary reason for their decision.

It is time for the Scottish Parliament to look in depth at the early learning and childcare system in Scotland. Until we have a good understanding of why our childcare system is failing families, we will never have effective solutions.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on petition PE2112



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petition seeks:

“an independent review of publicly-funded early learning and childcare in Scotland, in order to better understand and address the challenges families face when trying to secure and afford childcare.”

Funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

Local authorities have a duty to secure the provision of 1,140 hours per year for eligible children. Funded ELC is available to all three- and four-year-olds and some two- and five-year-olds. Eligibility for children under three is not currently universal, but is based on [parents/carers being in receipt of certain benefits or the child or parent/carer having experience of care](#). Funded ELC is available for all children up to the start of school – which is why some, but not all, five-year-olds will receive funded ELC.

The provision of funded ELC can be through: local authority centres; private, voluntary or independent nurseries; or childminders.

Costs and sufficiency

Providers of funded ELC are not allowed to charge additional fees. Parents/carers would need to fund childcare which is not covered by the funded ELC offer.

[Coram Family and Childcare undertakes annual surveys of childcare providers across Great Britain](#). This includes data on the costs of childcare. In its 2024 report, it found that, on average, the price of 25 hours of childcare for a child over two but under five is £120.15. This had increased by 6.8% compared to 2023, but remained cheaper than the average prices reported for England and Wales. The survey also reported that the average weekly cost of an after school club in Scotland is around £67, which is a little less than the average for Great Britain. The average weekly cost of a childminder after school was around £84, which was higher than the average cost in Great Britain as a whole.

Commenting on sufficiency of childcare options, Coram’s report stated—

“Differences in statutory requirements in Scotland mean that local authorities tend to have less knowledge than their English counterparts about the availability of childcare outside of the funded entitlements.”

Nevertheless, fewer local authorities in Scotland reported that there is sufficient childcare across a range of ages of children and types of provision, including funded ELC.

All childcare providers must register with the Care Inspectorate. The Care Inspectorate provides data on the number of settings and places available, but not unmet demand.

Social security and tax-free childcare

Families may be able to get help with childcare costs through the childcare element Universal Credit (and legacy benefits).

Under the [Tax-Free Childcare \(TFC\) scheme](#), a parent or carer pays funds for childcare into a TFC account. The Government then tops up each £8 paid in with an extra £2, up to a maximum of £500 per child every three months, or £1,000 every three months for a disabled child. Money in the TFC account can then be used to pay for approved childcare.

TFC can be paid for any child under 12 years of age, or under 17 if they are disabled. The eligibility criteria are the same as for the 30 hours entitlement in England (it is generally only available for working households). The scheme is UK-wide. Take up TFC is not routinely reported.

One cannot get Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, or Universal Credit.

Some parents may also still be using the [childcare vouchers scheme through their employers](#). This scheme was closed to new entrants in 2018.

Flexibility

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) provides that local authorities “secure that the mandatory amount of early learning and childcare is made available for each eligible pre-school child belonging to its area” (section 47) and that local authorities “must have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the method by which it makes early learning and childcare available ... is flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice when deciding how to access the service.” (section 52)

Local authorities have a duty to secure the availability of the service – the available types of service may not suit the circumstances of every family. [Statutory guidance](#) states—

“Section 52 of the 2014 Act does not place an expectation that every setting will offer every possible pattern of provision that a parent may request. This is to allow providers to effectively plan for and manage the capacity of their setting, and to acknowledge that for providers in the private, third and childminding sectors they will likely have a core offer for parents that underpins their business model. For example, settings will have established session times when delivering their service. While parents should have access to a range of sessions of varying lengths and start times, it is not

expected that individual settings must accommodate every request from parents to use their child's statutory funded early learning and childcare entitlement for only part of a session (i.e. choosing their own drop off/pick up time).

“Flexibility should be driven by local demand from families regarding the nature, and type, of provision and support that they require. The range of options available to families, should be established through consultation with representative populations of parents as specified in section 50 of the 2014 Act.”

One element of flexibility is that parents have a choice of provider and those providers may offer different types of places. The policy of 1,140 hours of funded ELC is underpinned by the [funding follows the child model](#). This says—

“Families will be able to access high quality funded ELC with the provider of their choice if that provider meets the criteria set out in the National Standard, wishes to deliver the funded entitlement, has a space available, is able to offer the funded hours in line with local ELC delivery plans (subject to the setting’s overall capacity) and is willing to enter into a contract with the local authority.”

Plans to expand funded childcare

The Programme for Government in 2021-22 said that the government would, “work to expand funded early learning and childcare for children aged 1 and 2, starting with low-income households within this Parliament.” The Scottish Government also plans to develop a “system of wraparound school age childcare, offering care before and after school and in the holidays, which will be free to families on the lowest incomes”.

The 2022 childcare strategy, [Best Start - strategic early learning and school age childcare plan 2022 to 2026](#), said—

“We will be taking the time to get policy design and engagement on our future childcare offers right, recognising that they must be appropriate to parents', carers' and families' needs and that these will differ depending on children's ages and stages, and families' circumstances. We will also work closely with providers in the public, private, third and childminding sectors throughout our design process.”

The [2023-24 Programme for Government](#) said that the expansion of childcare support would cover children from 9 months old.

The Government published a [School-age childcare delivery framework](#) in October 2023. This was sought to define the Government’s “action areas for the next three years, describes our transformational approach – centred around people and place – and considers how we will measure and evidence the impact of early delivery.”

In answer to a [Parliamentary Question \(S6W-25667\) in March 2024](#), the Government stated—

“We have recently completed and published two key pieces of research to help us understand and identify what models of ELC are best for younger children. The first is a summary of work to map [current ELC provision for younger children in Scotland](#) and the second [a literature review undertaken by Public Health Scotland](#). Evidence from this early insights work supports taking a considered approach to policy development in 2024-25, so that we understand what is right for families with under three’s.

“Over the next year we will continue to build on this early insights work by piloting new approaches via funding from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to test models of holistic family support and by engaging with the ELC sector to understand what is required to support an expansion.”

Ned Sharratt
SPICe Researcher

28/8/2024

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot. Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government written submission, 23 August 2024

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

Existing support for early learning and childcare from the Scottish Government

High quality early learning and childcare that is flexible, accessible and affordable plays a critical role in our society. It is vital to giving children the best possible start in life, to supporting families to thrive, and to ensuring that parents and carers can work, train or study. That is why the Scottish Government has nearly doubled the hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) for eligible children, from 600 hours to 1,140 hours per year.

Scotland is the only part of the UK to already offer 1,140 hours a year of funded ELC to all three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds regardless of their parents' working status – putting children first. This offer has been in place since August 2021 and equates to 30 hours per week term time, or 22 hours per week if used all year round. If families paid for our funded ELC offer themselves, it would cost them more than £5,500 per eligible child per year. The nearly £1 billion the Scottish Government is investing in 2024-25 in high quality ELC includes funding for councils to make the ELC offer available to around 25% of families with a two-year-old who stand to benefit most.

Funding Follows the Child is a provider neutral approach to delivery of 1140 which places choice in the hands of parents and carers, allowing them to access their child's entitlement from any setting in the public, private or third sector, including from a childminder – who meets the National Standard, has a place available and is willing to enter into a contract with their local authority. Independent research has shown that 97% of parents with a three- to five-year-old were satisfied that they could access funded ELC in a way that meets their needs.

Since 1 August 2023, all children who defer starting primary school have also been able to access an additional year of funded ELC, allowing families to make decisions for their child without the financial barrier of ELC costs. This legislative change aligns the funded ELC entitlement more closely with the existing right to defer for children in this age group.

Wider Support for Childcare Costs

There are currently reserved benefits that support families with childcare costs and are operated by the UK Government. Tax-free Childcare allows you to get up to £500 every 3 months (up to £2,000 a year) for each of your children to help with the costs of childcare. You may also be able to claim back up to 85% of your childcare costs if you're eligible for Universal Credit childcare.

The Scottish Government has also taken steps to create new benefits to support families without limited devolved welfare powers. Scottish Child Payment helps towards the costs of supporting your family. This is a weekly payment of £26.70 that you may be able to get for every child under 16 years of age, this payment is received every 4 weeks if the application is successful. Scottish Child Payment is one of the 5 family payments you may be able to get from Social Security Scotland, along with Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

Development of new childcare offers

The Scottish Government's first priority is eradicating child poverty, and in the context of a cost of living crisis in recent years we recognise that access to childcare remains a key concern for many families across Scotland. That is why, on 22 May 2024, the First Minister announced new investment of £16 million over two years within six Early Adopter Community (EAC) projects to tackle poverty and help families give their children the best start in life by expanding access to childcare services.

We are already delivering innovative school age childcare services to around 600 children from 500 families through EAC projects in Glasgow, Inverclyde, Clackmannanshire, and Dundee through the Early Adopters. Over the next two years, we will continue to build on these projects – expanding into new communities in Fife and Shetland and supporting families with children from the early years to the end of primary school.

Through the EACs, we will explore the childcare needs of families in these communities to inform local systems of funded childcare for families who need it most. This includes engaging with families to understand the challenges they face in accessing and affording suitable childcare. The EACs will be a leading source of evidence, data, insights and evaluation relating to the impact, approach, and economic outcomes associated with place-based, people-centred systems of childcare.

We have also doubled our investment in 2024/25 to a further £4 million to continue funding the 'Extra Time Programme' which is a joint initiative with the Scottish Football Association that is supporting 31 local football clubs and trusts to provide before school, after school, and holiday activity clubs for targeted primary school children from low income families.

The Extra Time Programme is providing around 3,000 children and families across Scotland each week with access to vital services, to support them entering and sustaining employment, training and study, as well better understanding the impact of reducing inequalities of access to children's activities for those most at risk of living in poverty.

To test innovative models of school age childcare for families most at risk of poverty, we are continuing to support 8 projects this financial year through the Access to Childcare Fund. The Scottish government has funded over £4.5 million through the Access to Childcare Fund since its inception in 2020 to deliver a range of activities, childcare, food and family support for children.

Last financial year, these 8 projects supported a total of 706 children from 591 families. These projects have provided low cost or free childcare for families on low incomes, targeted towards the six priority family types identified in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. The ACF projects are providing school age childcare services and wider family support which benefit families most in need.

Call for an independent review

The Scottish Household Survey already provides ministers with data annually on overall childcare costs for families in Scotland. The 2022 Survey found that 37% of households with at least one child aged 0-11 years old found it very easy to afford childcare, 16% found it easy and 24% found it neither easy nor difficult. 9% found it difficult to afford childcare and 5% found it very difficult. The Scottish Government also regularly reviews independent data and reports on the availability and affordability of childcare e.g. the annual Coram Childcare Survey.

With regard to the 1140 entitlement, a robust evaluation strategy is in place and research currently underway which will report in 2025. The evaluation strategy is outcomes-based with a primary focus on measuring outcomes for children, parents and carers families as a whole. A key part of the evaluation is to consider the accessibility, flexibility, affordability, quality and take up of funded ELC. More information is available in our [published 1140 evaluation strategy](#).

Over the remainder of this Parliament the Scottish Government is focused on delivering the ambitious childcare policies and commitments we have already made, within the very challenging financial circumstances we are facing as a result of budget decisions made by the UK Government. We will draw on the learning from the 1140 evaluation due in 2025 and continue to review other key sources of information about what families want and need to inform our work but are not currently planning to commission a further external review.

A wider review of the financial support provided to families with childcare costs through the benefits system would be for the UK Government to take forward as this is a reserved matter.

Directorate for Children and Families

Petitioner written submission, 16 September 2024

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

In 2021, Pregnant Then Screwed launched a petition at Westminster calling for a review of childcare in England. The response from the UK Government was very similar to the response received to this petition from the Scottish Government. Neither recognise that the system of early learning and childcare cannot be rebuilt without an independent evaluation of what is working well and what isn't. The Scottish Government marking its own homework is not an effective way of evaluating the system.

The Scottish Government's response to this petition has not identified why there are problems with early learning and childcare in Scotland. It does not explain why childcare in many parts of Scotland is both unaffordable and inaccessible for parents. Expanding funded childcare in Scotland will simply paper over the cracks when the Scottish Government doesn't even know if the system can cope with the expansion. We cannot continue to bolt on new parts to a system that is fundamentally flawed.

An independent review of all early learning and childcare would assess whether the £1 billion of public money being spent on funded childcare is being used in the most effective way. It would identify other ways of spending that money to improve this public service. Reviewing whether taxpayers' money is being spent in the most effective way is the moral and right thing to do.

The Scottish Government's response to this petition mentions the Scottish Household Survey. This asks questions of parents who have children of all ages up to 11 years old. This evidence is therefore irrelevant as we are looking at childcare provision for those under five years old. We know from our own surveys that parents across Scotland cannot get the childcare they want and need because it is inaccessible and unaffordable.

A year ago, the Labour Party commissioned a review of the early years sector in England. Labour said this review would develop a plan for the upcoming English expansion of the early entitlement offer, consider major reform of the early years workforce, and inform the party's plan to deal with challenges around the lack of availability of places in early years settings. This is the sort of review that we know is needed in Scotland. We know the early learning and childcare system in Scotland is broken but without understanding why it is broken, we can't fix it.

University of the West of Scotland written submission, 27 September 2024

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

I am writing to bring to the Committee's attention recently published research, 'Juggling childcare and work: the challenges facing mothers-performers in Scotland'¹, which I believe will be useful in your consideration of PE2112.

This research explores the challenges faced by working mothers in balancing childcare responsibilities with their professional commitments. While it specifically focuses on women working in the performance arts and entertainment sector, its findings and recommendations are relevant to a wider range of industries with atypical or non-standard working hours. A summary of the key findings and recommendations is provided below.

¹ Dr Aleksandra Webb. (December 2023). 'UWS-Oxfam partnership Report No: 13, Juggling childcare and work. The challenges facing mothers-performers in Scotland'. Available at: <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/7123/report-no-13-juggling-childcare-and-work-the-challenges-facing-mothers-performers-in-scotland.pdf>

Expensive and inflexible childcare

- Childcare that is both costly and inflexible is incompatible with non-standard work patterns, negatively impacting personal and financial wellbeing.
- Interviewees reported significant childcare expenses, with annual costs ranging from £10,000 to £12,500 per child. These high costs often force difficult decisions and ‘professional sacrifices’, such as opting out of work when childcare expenses outweigh the benefits of employment. Additionally, oversubscription of less expensive public nurseries leads to a reliance on more costly private options.
- There is frustration over the lack of flexibility in traditional childcare, which does not accommodate irregular or after-hours work schedules typical of non-standard arrangements. Funded childcare hours are rarely available outside the standard ‘nine-to-five’ window, meaning parents have to rely on informal childcare from friends and family or to pay private childminders to cover evening and weekend needs.
- Many interviewees found themselves paying for childcare they could not use due to work commitments, where they had to pay both for their child’s nursery spot and for temporary childcare arrangements while working away.

Family-friendly workplace policies and practices

- The research highlights shortcomings in family-friendly workplace policies and flexible work practices, which create significant barriers for parents who wish to remain in their chosen career path.
- Interviewees described employers as being “unaware of – or worse, disinterested in – mothers’ needs”, with a perceived “culture of silence” over motherhood and childcare.
- In practice, there is little support for mothers returning to work, including a lack of appropriate facilities at workplaces and limited flexibility in working hours to align with available childcare provision.

Recommendations

The report provides a set of recommendations to shape policies and practices that support sustainable childcare solutions. Implementing these recommendations will help create an environment that meets the needs of parents and promotes inclusivity across the creative industries and beyond.

1. Increase financial investment: Ensure universal, high-quality, wraparound childcare by prioritising measures that make it more affordable for parents’ return to, and sustained engagement in, paid employment.
2. Improve access to flexible childcare: Expand childcare options to accommodate non-standard work patterns, including evenings, nights, and weekends, with special consideration for freelancers.

3. Recognise diverse needs: Promote greater recognition of the unique needs and experiences of parents working in non-standard employment within childcare policy and practice.
4. Co-design and co-evaluate childcare solution: Collaborate with parents to co-design and co-evaluate childcare solutions that align with the specific needs of those in non-standard forms of paid employment.
5. Promote and champion family-friendly working practices: Advocate for family-friendly practices, particularly within sectors characterised by non-standard forms of paid employment, such as the performance and entertainment sectors.
6. Support employers: Encourage employers to enhance visibility and value of caring responsibilities in the workplace, fostering environments that drive changes to provide improved and tailored support.
7. Implement evaluation mechanisms: Establish robust and transparent evaluation mechanisms to identify successful initiatives and areas requiring further progress.
8. Introduce a new National Outcome for Care: Create a new National Outcome for Care within Scotland's National Performance Framework, supported by clear National Indicators to track progress in childcare provision.

Tim Eagle MSP written submission, 3 October 2024

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

I would like to take this opportunity to put forward my support for the above-mentioned petition submitted by the charity, Pregnant then Screwed.

Despite the roll out of the expanded hours in 2021, many parts of the country continue to experience huge demand for early learning and childcare places with significant knock-on consequences to parents, particularly mothers.

While any expansion of hours is welcome, there were several negative consequences that have occurred as a result of how the roll out was managed. The level of funding continues to be a barrier to private providers setting up and running facilities, some private providers feel there is an unfair advantage to council managed settings, many 2's groups were lost due to the need to deliver the 1140 hours target, and particularly in rural areas, the lack of further education credits to regional colleges is limiting the number of spaces available on courses despite many young people being keen to explore the profession as a career.

On top of this, the increase in the level of children requiring enhanced support is adding further pressure to the management of facilities. This need for increased staffing to provide for all children was not appropriately considered in the original roll out of the expanded hours by councils.

Childcare requires not just school hour provision, but for true flexibility, it requires an agile wraparound service which can meet the varying needs of parents throughout the day and during the school holidays. At present many parents do not feel those needs can be met locally. For those in rural areas of Scotland, a significant barrier to childcare is the lack of affordable transport options.

The action plan: A blueprint for 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland, published in 2017 had three main aims; ensuring children's development improves, improving family wellbeing, and increase parents and carers opportunities to take up or sustain work, training and study. Commissioning an independent review now will allow the Parliament and interest groups to look at the successes and challenges over the last seven years, and offer suggestions that could help highlight key areas to work on moving forward.

Raising a child and being part of a family should be a joyful experience. One filled with adventure and fun. It is essential that any government takes very seriously its responsibility to support parents in that role with the flexibility of choice. In the spirit of choice I would add that fully funded, accessible, wraparound early learning facilities require to be supported by a package of strong measures around paid maternity and paternity leave, flexible working policies and information to support parents.

I am delighted to offer my personal support to this petition.

Petitioner written submission, 21 October 2024

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

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."