

# childwise

Childcare news for parents

Childwise Issue 44 Spring 2012  
Daycare Trust National Childcare Campaign

NATIONAL CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN

daycare  
trust

## Working together for high-quality childcare



**Results of Daycare Trust's  
2012 Childcare costs survey  
2012/2013 Tax Credit changes**

## Daycare Trust Information Service

Daycare Trust offers free childcare advice and information to families living in England and Wales. Visit our websites to find out more and to download free factsheets and booklets.



[www.payingforchildcare.org.uk](http://www.payingforchildcare.org.uk) gives detailed information about the help you can get with your childcare costs.



[www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk) provides useful information about childcare for families, including the free resources listed below.

### Factsheets

- What are my childcare options?
- Free nursery education for three- and four-year olds
- Help with childcare costs for working parents

Visit [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation) to see our full selection of factsheets.

### Parent booklets

- A guide to childcare for disabled children
- A guide for disabled parents
- The benefits of high-quality childcare
- Easy read childcare booklet

### Current Information projects



Daycare Trust is working with The Grandparents' Association to support grandparents who provide childcare for their grandchildren. [www.grandparents-association.org.uk](http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk).



Daycare Trust is working in partnership with Netmums, to answer childcare questions from parents in Netmums' Coffeehouse forums. [www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)



Daycare Trust has recently merged with the National Association of Family Information Services who are working with KIDS to provide advice and information to families of disabled children and young people around personal budgets. [www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk)

**To find out about childcare in your local area, contact your local Family Information Service (FIS). Find contact details for your FIS by visiting [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourFIS](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourFIS) or by searching in your local phone book.**

Still can't find the information you need? Email the Information team at [info@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:info@daycaretrust.org.uk).

## Tax credit changes in 2012/2013

If you plan to claim tax credits in 2012/2013, it is important to be aware of changes that are proposed to take effect from 6 April 2012. Check your award notice to see how you have been affected.

### Child Tax Credit

The income limit is going down, which means that most families with an income above around £26,000 (£32,200 if you have more than one child) may see payments decrease or stop. Families earning less than this amount may see their payments increase in line with the new rates below:

- Child element payments increase from a maximum of £2,555 to a maximum of £2,690 per year.
- Disabled child element payments increase from a maximum of £2,800 to a maximum of £2,950 per year.
- Severely disabled child element payments increase from a maximum of £1,130 to a maximum of £1,190 per year.

### Working Tax Credit

Rates and eligibility criteria and rates for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit are not changing this year. However, other elements of Working Tax Credit are changing. For more information, visit the Working Families website: [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk).

### Backdating payments

Previously, HMRC paid any tax credits you were due for as much as three months before the date on your application. This is known as 'backdating' your claim. Starting from 6 April 2012, HMRC will only backdate your claim for one month. Make sure you apply for tax credits as soon as you start using childcare!

**Remember – avoid tax credit overpayments by telling HMRC within one month about changes to your income or family circumstances. Contact the Tax Credit Helpline on 0345 300 3900.**

For more information about the help you can get with childcare costs, visit [www.payingforchildcare.org.uk](http://www.payingforchildcare.org.uk).



## High-quality childcare

All parents want to know that their child will be in safe hands and that they will have a happy and enjoyable experience whilst they are away from home. By choosing high-quality childcare, you can feel safe and secure pursuing work, education or anything else while your child is at childcare.

### Daycare Trust's latest quality research

Recent Daycare Trust research found that parents look for a wide range of things when choosing childcare and making judgments about quality. Parents often consider practical issues such as location, cost and opening hours in their choice. However, most say that trusting the staff with their children comes before practical considerations. Parents told us they look for staff who:

- are attentive to their children's emotional needs;
- are able to monitor how well their children are progressing, and;
- encourage their children to take part in stimulating activities to help them learn.

Some parents find Ofsted reports helpful in informing them how different settings are meeting basic standards of care and education. However, many parents told us they wanted more information and guidance which could help them consider what childcare setting could provide the level of quality they wanted for their children.

Read more information about Daycare Trust's research on identifying quality in early years by visiting the research section of our website, [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk).

### The role of Ofsted

All registered childcare services in England are registered by Ofsted. Ofsted are responsible for inspecting childcare settings

and making sure they follow national standards, including supporting the social and emotional development of young children. Settings are inspected and graded (Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory and Inadequate) at least once every three years. You can view inspection reports online at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) by using the unique registration number (URN) of the provider, or you can ask the childcare provider to show you a copy.

In Wales, childcare for children up to the age of eight which is provided outside the child's home is registered by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). You can request to see inspection reports using the name of the service and the post code from CSSIW at: [www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk).

Ofsted and CSSIW make sure that all registered childcare providers (including childminders) who care for young children follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) standards in England, or the Foundation Phase curriculum in Wales.

**For more information about the EYFS and choosing high-quality childcare, download our free factsheet about high-quality childcare from our website, [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation).**

### How to find high-quality childcare

When choosing childcare it is important that you visit different settings and make your own decisions. Ofsted or CSSIW inspections are no substitute for parental judgment. You know your child better than anyone else and it is important that you trust your instincts.

Once you are ready to start researching local childcare providers, contact your Family Information Service (see box below). They hold an up-to-date list of all registered childcare



providers in the area, so you can find out what is available near to you or your work. Once you have the list of childcare settings, it's a good idea to phone around to find out who has vacancies and to arrange a visit.

When visiting, first impressions count!

- How welcome do they make you and your child feel?
- Are the children and staff happy?
- Are there plenty of activities going on?

Remember to take a list of questions to ask the childcare provider, including:

- What is the ratio of staff to children? How many children do they care for?
- How will they keep you informed about your child's progress?
- What is staff turnover like? How well qualified are the staff?
- Is there plenty of outdoor space?
- How will your child's cultural background be reflected and respected?

You can download and print more questions at [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation).

In addition, ask childcare providers for references. Other parents are often a good source of information. They will be able to answer questions that official reports aren't able to. If a childcare provider is not happy to answer questions or give you references, you may need to question why.

## The role of your local Family Information Service (FIS)

Family Information Services (FIS) provide free, comprehensive information and support for families in your local area as well as information about services for children and young people aged 0-19. If you are struggling to find suitable childcare for your child, your FIS may be able to help you by giving you details of childcare that fits your needs.

Just some of the services and topics the FIS can provide information and advice on:

- local childcare and children's centres
- benefits and tax credits
- children with special/additional needs or disabilities
- parenting support
- becoming a childminder

Find contact details for your local FIS by visiting [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourFIS](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourFIS)



## Keep in touch

Once your child is using childcare, you should be kept informed about their welfare by the provider. Additionally, Daycare Trust believes that all parents should have the opportunity to be fully involved in their child's early learning. Ask the childcare setting if there is any way you can help out.

Volunteering can have benefits for both you and your child. Firstly, it lets you become more engaged with your child's early education and research shows that this improves children's social and learning outcomes. Volunteering also helps you find out what activities your child is doing at the setting so you can get more ideas for home.

For information about other ways to be involved, ask your childcare provider or read about 'Parent involvement' on our website, [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation).



## Save our Sure Start

Sure Start Children's Centres offer a vital lifeline to children, parents and families. They not only provide childcare but play a key role in health and family support. Until 2010 Sure Start funding was protected by the government. However that "ring fence" has now been removed. Because of cuts to local authority funding hundreds of centres across England have faced closure, merger or are currently under threat.

January, February and March is when local authorities set their budgets for the upcoming year, including their budget for Sure Start. Unfortunately that means it's a nervous time for Sure Start Centre users as it is likely to be when any cuts are announced. The effect of the cuts is already being felt; six centres have already closed outright while a further 118 have been merged with other centres and services. However, many further closures have been prevented by families who have campaigned to save these vital facilities.

That is why this year Daycare Trust and UNISON have launched a campaign to help parents, staff and other centre users who are concerned about the

future of their Sure Start Centre. It includes a campaign guide, resource pack and grants scheme to equip users to fight Sure Start Centre cuts or closures in their local area.



Is your local Sure Start Centre under threat? Maybe it's been in the local news, you've spoken to another parent or member of staff, or you've heard about a public consultation? If you're concerned then don't delay; to access the free resources, apply for a grant, or just find out more visit [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/surestart](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/surestart). Also don't forget to sign up to Daycare Trust's Facebook page and follow the campaign on Twitter at #SOSurestart.

### Calling all London parents!

Do you want childcare in London to be more affordable, flexible and a better quality? Do you believe that no parent should be prevented from working because they cannot access childcare? Now is your chance to make a difference. Daycare Trust is joining up with several other charities in London to campaign to ensure all families can access childcare when they need it, at a price they can afford, and find jobs which are family friendly. The election to decide London's next mayor is just around the corner so it's the perfect time get involved. There are lots of exciting opportunities for you to tell the real story of childcare in the capital, from writing letters and signing petitions to meeting with politicians to let them know your views. For more information please contact Rory Edwards, Campaigns Officer at Daycare Trust on 020 7940 7525.

# Childcare costs survey 2012

## Average childcare costs in Britain 2012

Nursery (under 2)	£102.05
Nursery (2 and over)	£97.51
Childminder (under 2)	£92.68
Childminder (2 and over)	£91.87
Out-of-school club (15 hours)	£45.53

In February, Daycare Trust published our annual Childcare costs survey, which looks at the cost and availability of childcare across Britain. This year's survey found that childcare costs in many regions have increased by more than the rate of inflation and that childcare provision is still patchy for many groups of parents and children.

More broadly, parents in Britain are facing difficult financial circumstances: wages have frozen in the last year – rising by just 0.3 per cent – meaning parents are struggling to make their money stretch further. The amount of help that parents can receive towards their childcare costs through the Tax Credit system has also been cut from a maximum of 80 per cent of costs to 70 per cent. This has resulted in an average loss of £544 per year for families.

Set against these challenging financial circumstances, rising childcare costs are likely to have hit parents even harder this past year:

### Nursery costs

For the first time in the history of the costs survey series, average nursery costs in Britain topped the £100 mark for 25 hours care for a child under two, although there were large differences between regions. The most expensive region for nursery care is London where the average cost of 25 hours care for a child under two is £126.80. The least expensive region for nursery care was the West Midlands where the average cost is £91.04 for 25 hours care.

### Childminder costs

Childminder costs are generally less expensive than nursery costs in Britain. The average costs of 25 hours care is £93 for a child under two and £92 for a child aged two and over. However, in Wales and London average childminder costs outstrip average nursery costs. For London in particular, this may be a consequence of childminders having to increase their fees to take account of higher living costs.

### Out-of-school costs

Out-of-school clubs provide an essential wraparound service for working parents with school-aged children. Unlike early years childcare, the cost of out-of-school childcare is not the highest in London, where it costs an average of £47.48 for 15 hours care. This may be a result of increased subsidy for these services in London. The most expensive region for out-of-school club care is the North East where the average cost is £55.50 for 15 hours care.

### Availability

Worrying gaps in the availability of childcare still persist, with only 46 per cent of local authorities in England saying they have enough childcare across the whole authority to meet the needs of parents working full-time. This figure drops to around one fifth of authorities in Scotland and Wales.

The largest gaps in provision that we identified are for disabled children and parents who work outside standard office hours of nine-to-five. Comparing these figures to previous years, we see that there has been no marked improvement in the availability of childcare in Britain.

### Places for two-year-olds

From 2013, the 20 per cent most disadvantaged two-year-olds will be entitled to receive 15 hours free early education. This will be extended to the 40 per cent most disadvantaged two-year-olds by 2014, meaning many more disadvantaged parents will be able to access affordable childcare.

For this initiative to really benefit children, the childcare provided must be high-quality. This year's survey found that less than half (49 per cent) of local authorities believe they currently have enough high-quality childcare to fulfil this offer. Although this is not surprising – given that the offer was only announced in November 2011 – it shows that local authorities have a significant amount of work to do between now and 2014 in order to ensure the best outcomes for children.

To find out about help with childcare costs, visit

[www.payingforchildcare.org.uk](http://www.payingforchildcare.org.uk).



Daycare Trust is a member of the  
Campaign to End Child Poverty

For more information about the campaign  
visit [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)