

GIVE US A HAND WITH CHILDCARE

10 KEY MESSAGES FROM PARENTS IN SCOTLAND

Childcare is a vital service for families. High quality childcare and early learning services provide nurturing, stimulating experiences for children that help them to grow and develop. It also helps parents who would like to take up and remain in employment, or study, balance this with raising their children.

SPEAKING OUT

Save the Children believes decision makers must take the voices, view and experiences of parents into account in order to create an affordable, flexible and high quality childcare and early learning system in Scotland. That is why we organised a series of ‘childcare conversations’ between parents and local decision makers across the country, from the central belt to the highlands and islands and the south of Scotland. The vast majority of parents who took part were living on low incomes. This briefing summarises the key messages and findings from our report ‘Give us a hand with childcare.’

KEY MESSAGES FROM PARENTS ABOUT CHILDCARE

We have identified 10 key messages that the parents who took part in these conversations raised about using and accessing childcare. They reflect the main challenges that need to be addressed to ensure all families in Scotland can access and benefit from high quality, affordable, flexible childcare.

10 KEY MESSAGES FROM PARENTS:

1. CHILDCARE SERVICES MUST SUPPORT CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING
2. THE COST OF CHILDCARE IS TOO HIGH – PARTICULARLY FOR PARENTS ON LOW INCOMES
3. PARENTS HAVE A STRONG DESIRE TO WORK – BUT FEEL TRAPPED BY THE COST OF CHILDCARE
4. THE HIGH COST OF CHILDCARE MEANS THAT PARENTS ON LOW INCOMES ARE OFTEN NO BETTER OFF IF THEY WORK
5. A LACK OF AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE IS MAKING BALANCING PARENTING AND WORKING EVEN MORE DIFFICULT
6. CHILDCARE SERVICES MUST BE MORE FLEXIBLE IF THEY ARE TO SUPPORT PARENTS INTO WORK
7. EMPLOYERS ALSO NEED TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEEDS OF WORKING PARENTS
8. THE AVAILABILITY OF CHILDCARE VARIES SIGNIFICANTLY
9. THERE ARE PARTICULAR CHILDCARE CHALLENGES FOR PARENTS WISHING TO STUDY
10. MANY PARENTS HAVE TO RELY ON FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR CHILDCARE

'TRYING TO FIND SUITABLE CHILDCARE IS LIKE RUNNING INTO BRICK WALLS ALL THE TIME'

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

The conversations with parents revealed that there is not one single factor that makes finding childcare difficult. Rather there are a number of different and often overlapping elements that vary in importance depending on the specific circumstances and needs of individual families. What is clear, however, is that parents living on low incomes are facing specific and identifiable challenges when it comes to finding suitable childcare that provides opportunities that can aid their children's growth and development and allow them to successfully balance the demands of work or training with raising a family.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the conversations we had with parents was the level of consensus that emerged. Families are facing very similar barriers to accessing childcare wherever they live, most pertinently expensive and inflexible provision. Parents also want similar things from childcare provision, namely high quality care that benefits their children and is easily affordable and accessible.

LISTENING TO FAMILIES ABOUT CHILDCARE

Our report, Give us a hand with childcare, sets out the experiences, views and voices of parents in Scotland about childcare. It highlights their ability to speak directly about major policy issues affecting their lives and the lives of their children. Save the Children believes that the voices of parents, particularly those living on low incomes or with experience of poverty, should be at the heart of the local and national government drive to improve early learning and childcare in Scotland. Parents are passionate about giving their children the best possible start in life. The insights they have shared with us reinforces our conviction that all parents have a valuable contribution to make in shaping the future of Scotland's childcare system. With the right support and opportunities all families can achieve great things and every child can thrive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Katie McSherry, Campaigner (Scotland)
E: k.mcsherry@savethechildren.org.uk
T: +44 (0)131 572 8232

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries.
We save children's lives. We fight for their rights.
We help them fulfil their potential.

Save the Children
2nd Floor, Prospect House,
5 Thistle Street, Edinburgh EH2 1DF
T: +44 (0)131 527 8200 F: +44 (0)131 527 8201

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

'And you stand back and you look at it, how can you put a price on that [a child's wellbeing]. Because you want them to be looked after, you want them to be safe...but you want it to be sustainable and affordable.'

PARENT, EDINBURGH

'I expect to pay something for childcare but at the moment I pay 50% of my salary on childcare. That's more than my mortgage. It's getting to a point where it's difficult to see the point of working.'

PARENT, DUNDEE

'I think it would help parents if the childcare facility available to them did not cost as much. The hourly rate for childcare is expensive... make childcare more affordable for those on a low income... please make childcare cheaper.'

PARENT, WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

'We want more flexibility. It would be great if we could bunch together our nursery placements over full days [instead of half days]'

PARENT, RENFREWSHIRE

'It's not the work, I can find a job but I can't find the childcare.'

PARENT, GLASGOW

'There is no childcare available at weekends for the work that is available.'

PARENT, RENFREWSHIRE