

EMBARGOED: 00.01 hours, Tuesday 20th February 2007

Scottish childcare costs soar above inflation

Nursery fees in Scotland are increasing at almost double the rate of those in England, and rising at more than five times the rate of those in Wales, according to a survey published today by Children in Scotland and Daycare Trust.

A typical full-time nursery place for a child under two is £146 a week – still lower than the cost in England (£152), but rising very fast. This compares to average UK earnings of £447 a week last year. The costs have increased from £132 last year, a rise of ten per cent. The cost increases in England and Wales were six per cent and two per cent respectively.

Fees for childminders are slightly lower than nurseries, with a typical place being £141 for a full time week. This represents a seven per cent rise on last year. The typical cost for an out of school club was £38 for a 15-hour week, a 15 per cent increase on last year's figures. The highest reported costs in the survey were £250 a week, for both childminders and nursery provision, much lower than the highest reported costs in England, but still setting parents back £13,000 a year.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said: "If we get them right, early years services have a huge role to play in contributing to the wellbeing of the child and developing healthy lifestyles alongside the care required by parents. The survey results underline the need to integrate pre-school education with childcare, and ensure that all young children have access to full-day provision when required in neighbourhood services. This would build better community cohesion, support more secure childhoods and move Scotland and the UK up the rankings of child well-being in advanced nations." *

Alison Garnham, joint-chief executive of Daycare Trust, said, "With typical childcare costs rising by ten per cent to around a third of average earnings, parents cannot afford to bear the burden of increasing childcare costs alone. Despite significant government investment in early years and childcare, funding needs to be further improved so that all children have access to high quality, affordable and accessible childcare."

Irene Audain, chief executive of the Scottish Out of School Care Network, added: “Increased, long term and stable funding investment in all services for children and young people is needed, especially to address serious gaps in provision for children and young people with disabilities and to support parents in caring for their children, whether they are working or not. We need to invest in children in terms of their rights to care, play, learning and leisure activities, which enrich their lives and are affordable and accessible to all.”

Summary of survey results:

	Nurse ry (Under r 2)	Nurse ry (2 and over)	High est Nurs ery Cost	Childmi nder (Under 2)	Childmin der (2 and over)	Highest Childmi nder cost	Out of School Club	Highest Out of School Club
Inner London	205	176	330	171	162	350	29	218
Outer London	182	158	329	177	179	400	37	90
South East	180	171	375	167	165	325	45	175
South West	154	141	322	149	148	250	36	85
East of England	152	132	230	151	137	240	32	105
West Midlands	127	126	325	116	116	250	44	180
East Midlands	127	124	167	122	122	250	36	115
Yorks & Humber side	132	126	200	117	117	200	37	110
North West	131	123	216	111	113	250	37	90
North East	131	125	260	129	129	275	43	88
England Average	152	140	375	141	139	400	38	218
Scotland	146	132	250	141	140	250	38	80
Wales	131	126	222	135	137	275	34	90

Compiled from a survey of 145 out of 202 Children's Information Services in Britain, based on 50 hours a week in a nursery or with a childminder and 15 hours a week at an out of school club.

The survey also indicated that finding suitable childcare is even more difficult for parents of disabled children. Many children's information services were unsure of additional costs for disabled children as these are established on a case-by-case basis according to need. Twenty-five per cent of respondents said that there was not enough provision in their area for disabled children and 45 per cent were unsure whether there was enough provision.

Help with childcare costs is available through the tax credit system, and many parents can now also get tax relief through their employer, via childcare vouchers. Three and four year olds are entitled to 12.5 hours of free nursery education a week. However, parents in the UK pay around 70 per cent of the cost of childcare, compared with European parents who pay around 30 per cent of their childcare costs.

Bronwen Cohen added: "In Scotland in 2007 we should not still be in the position where access to services for young children is determined by their parents' employment status and income."

"There is a widespread recognition among Scotland's political parties that much more needs to be done to develop better services for young children. This is likely to be a key issue in the upcoming Scottish election."

Children in Scotland and Daycare Trust are calling on the government to invest in high quality early education and childcare services by:

- Investing more in supply side funding and eventually phasing out the reliance on tax credits to pay for childcare costs
- Ensuring that local authorities have adequate funding to develop services which meet the needs of all families
- Addressing the concerns raised by the recent OECD Starting Strong II report * over the failure to integrate education and childcare – conceptually and in practice – in the UK

(ends)

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, and Alison Garnham and Emma Knights, joint chief executives of Daycare Trust, are available for interview and comment.
- This is the sixth annual Daycare Trust childcare costs survey in England, and the third year the survey has been completed in Scotland and Wales.

- The childcare costs survey for England and Wales was released on 30th January 2007 and is available on Daycare Trust's website.
- * Unicef's report *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child wellbeing in rich countries*, published 13th February 2007. www.unicef.org
- * The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's report, *Starting Strong II*, published in October 2006, can be viewed at: www.oecd.org

	Typical weekly nursery cost for child under 2 (England) £	Inflation (CPI) ¹ %	Average weekly earnings¹ £
2006	144	3.0	447
2005	141	2.1	431
2004	134	1.3	419
2003	128	1.4	404
2002	120	1.3	391
2001	110 ²	1.2	376

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics

² Nursery costs not differentiated for under 2 and 2 and over

- Daycare Trust is the national childcare charity, campaigning for quality affordable accessible childcare for all and raising the voices of children, parents and carers. Daycare Trust runs a childcare helpline (020 7840 3350) which is open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10am –5 pm. Parents can also visit our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk for information.
- Children in Scotland is Scotland's national children's agency, bringing together voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals to improve the lives of Scotland's children and their families.

For further information, contact Chris Small at Children in Scotland on 0131 222 2419 / email csmall@childreninscotland.org.uk

or Kate Goddard at Daycare Trust on 020 7840 3350 (out of hours 0780-4508768) / email kgoddard@daycaretrust.org.uk