

issue 15  
Spring 2003

# childwise

CHECK OUT CHILDCARE: NEWS AND VIEWS FOR PARENTS FROM DAYCARE TRUST



## National Sure Start Month

time to celebrate

Why childcare is good for children

He who cares wins

Visit Daycare Trust's website at [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk)

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# OPENING doors

Welcome to the summer edition of *Childwise*, Daycare Trust's newsletter for parents.

## welcome to Childwise

This June, thousands of early education, childcare, health and family support services will open their doors to celebrate the options available to parents and families. National Sure Start

Month provides you with a chance to find out more about these services and how they make a difference for children and parents. You can get involved as a parent and working with children through all the new job opportunities.

During June, Daycare Trust will also be looking at how men can get more involved caring for children. National Childcare Week on 9-15 June will look at why we need more men in childcare, what is stopping men from caring for children and how men could be encouraged to play a more active role in childcare.

Childcare has never been so high profile. More and more parents need good quality, affordable childcare that meets the needs of their children and their families. It's crucial that parents' voices are heard loud and clear to meet the childcare challenge.

Have fun in National Sure Start Month!



**Stephen Burke**  
Director, Daycare Trust

# Counting the cost of childcare

Daycare Trust's 2003 survey of the cost of nurseries, childminders and after school clubs shows how parents continue to face soaring childcare bills.

The typical cost of a nursery place for a child under two is now £128 a week or more than £6,650 a year, up 6.7% in the last year. In some parts of the country the cost of a nursery place is much higher, particularly in London and the south east, where on average a nursery place costs £168 a week (£8,730 a year), and a childminding place £118 per week (£6100 a year).

In the survey of Children's Information Services, three-quarters say that parents report a lack of quality affordable childcare in their area. The lack of provision for children under two and the lack of after school clubs were highlighted as the biggest problems facing parents.

Daycare Trust is calling for more help for parents towards the cost of childcare from both the Government and employers.

### Typical weekly childcare costs (£) for a full-time nursery or childminding place and 15 hours a week for an after school club place in England 2003

	NURSERY (UNDER 2)	NURSERY (OVER 2)	CHILDMINDER (UNDER 2)	CHILDMINDER (OVER 2)	AFTER- SCHOOL CLUB
INNER LONDON	168	152	139	141	30
OUTER LONDON	154	136	138	131	30
SOUTH EAST	161	149	133	131	37
SOUTH WEST	111	103	117	112	34
EAST ENGLAND	147	136	141	138	48
WEST MIDLANDS	104	101	94	92	32
EAST MIDLANDS	105	104	109	109	35
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	111	107	107	107	23
NORTH WEST	107	101	93	93	30
NORTH EAST	112	107	108	113	38
<b>NATIONAL AVERAGE</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>34</b>

The figures were compiled by a survey of 111 of the 150 Children's Information Services in England.

## How childcare benefits children

Quality early education and childcare benefits children's development. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project is a long-term study into the effects of pre-school education on children's attainment and development. Recent findings from this project have shown that:

- Good quality pre-school experiences support children's social and educational development
- Pre-school attendance improves children's independence, concentration, and the way they mix and interact with other children
- Good quality early education was found across all types of settings including day nurseries, playgroups and nursery schools
- Integrated settings that provide a combination of education and care were particularly beneficial to children

The study also found that what parents and carers did with their children at home had an impact on their learning – children whose parents sang songs, read and talked with them about numbers, letters and daily life were more likely to do well on starting school.

For more information on this project you can visit the website [www.ioe.ac.uk/projects/eppe](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/projects/eppe) or you can contact Research Co-ordinator Brenda Taggart on 020 7612 6219.

## Next steps to end childcare lottery

The Government has pledged to explore what more needs to be done to create childcare for all. During the recent Budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced a new review to examine how childcare can best support the drive to end child poverty. Daycare Trust said the review must tackle the childcare lottery that still exists in Britain where families' access to childcare depends on where they live, their income and employment status.

# Time to celebrate



## CHILDCARE AT HOME

Parents will for the first time have the option of registered childcare within their own home after the introduction of the Approved Home Childcarers scheme.

What constitutes an approved home carer? They must either be a registered childminder who has been approved by OFSTED to care for children in their parents' own home, or a domiciliary care worker or nurse employed through a registered care agency. Nannies and au-pairs do not currently qualify as Approved Home Childcarers.

This scheme is in its early stages, but long term it could offer an ideal solution for parents who need childcare at home, particularly for children with disabilities or special needs or where parents work shifts or outside the hours of most registered childcare provision.

For more information on registered home childcarers, contact your local Children's Information Service.

Thousands of events, open days and activities will be staged throughout June to celebrate National Sure Start Month. It will involve everyone who provides early education, childcare, health and family support and will be a great opportunity for parents and families to find out more about the variety of services available for children.

Sponsored by Sure Start, a new Government unit in the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions, Sure Start Month is being organised by Kids' Clubs Network, Daycare Trust, National Childminding Association, National Day Nurseries Association and Pre-School Learning Alliance. All these organisations will be holding events during specific weeks:



- 1-8 June**  
National Day Nurseries Week
- 7-13 June**  
Pre-School Playweek
- 9-15 June**  
National Childcare Week
- 14-21 June**  
National Childminding Week
- 23-30 June**  
Kids' Clubs Week

To find out more about National Sure Start Month, events being organised and how you can get involved call 020 7522 6962 or visit [www.nationalsurestartmonth.com](http://www.nationalsurestartmonth.com). Promotional kits are available for those holding an event, which include leaflets, posters, balloons and stickers.

*Above: Sure Start Minister Baroness Cathy Ashton launches National Sure Start Month.*

## He who cares wins

National Childcare Week 2003 will take place on 9-15 June and will explore men's role both working in childcare and as active fathers. During the week we will look at why we need more men in childcare, what is stopping men from caring for children and how men could be encouraged to play a more active role in childcare.

National Childcare Week will feature national activities including:

- a MORI survey of public attitudes towards men in childcare
- 'He who cares wins', a major national conference on men caring for children, on Tuesday 10 June
- an art competition for children to paint or draw their male hero, organised with Bright Horizons Family Solutions and Nursery World
- a new report on key policy issues surrounding men and childcare
- famous fathers talking about their role as carers

## Fathers' Day Fun

National charity Fathers Direct, with support from the Department for Education and Skills, is launching a promotion to celebrate Fathers' Day as a day for dads to take their children out and do something active with them.

Thousands of attractions around the country are putting on special events over the weekend of 14/15 June, and many will include discount offers and even 'Kids go Free' places.

For more information and for details of events and attractions in your area, visit [www.fathersdirect.com/fathersday](http://www.fathersdirect.com/fathersday) or call Fathers Direct on 020 7920 9491.

For more information about National Childcare Week or any of the events taking place, visit [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk) or call Daycare Trust on 020 7840 3350.

## dear childwise...

*I'm trying to find out about childcare vouchers. What are these and what are the benefits of them?*

One of the ways employers can help their staff with childcare costs is through the provision of childcare vouchers. Employers can sign up to a childcare voucher scheme (usually run by a separate organisation, who will charge an administration fee) and can then distribute childcare vouchers to their staff. They are normally distributed in lieu of part of the employee's salary. Staff can use the vouchers to pay towards their childcare costs and it is the childcare provider who then claims the value of the voucher back from the organisation who runs the scheme. The particular benefit of childcare vouchers is that the value of the voucher is currently exempt from National Insurance (NI) payments for both employers and employees. Childcare vouchers can be a really positive way for employers to support working parents as well as having a positive impact on their recruitment and retention. There are several organisations who run childcare vouchers schemes – speak to your employer, your local Children's Information Service or carry out a web search on 'childcare vouchers' for details of organisations who run schemes.

The Government is currently undertaking a consultation on employer-supported childcare with the aim of making it easier for employers to help working parents with childcare costs. This includes investigating the possibility of childcare vouchers being exempt from tax as well as NI. The consultation finishes at the end of May. If you'd like to find out more about this consultation and have your say on the proposals being put forward visit [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations)

Yours, Childwise

## Children's Centres



£435 million is being invested in the development of children's centres over the next three years. Hundreds of thousands of children will be able to use new services, which will particularly target disadvantaged areas.

Speaking at a recent seminar Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, stated: "Our targeted funding for children's services will provide early learning, child care, health services, family support and a base for childminders for families in disadvantaged areas. Children's centres will benefit at least 650,000 children by 2006."

## Taking up tax credits

Don't miss out on financial help that you could be entitled to through the new Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, introduced in April. As a parent you could be eligible for help toward the costs of bringing up children and if you work you may also be eligible to receive help towards registered childcare costs. The amount families receive will depend on their circumstances.

To find out more about these call the Tax Credit helpline on 0845 300 3900 or visit [www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits) where you can also apply online.

## Would you like to work more flexibly?

Great news for working parents - new legislation introduced in April 2003 means that mothers and fathers of children under the age of six, or disabled children under 18, now have the legal right to apply to work flexibly. This could include a reduction in your working hours, changes to the time you start/finish work or perhaps an option to work from home.

Although this legislation doesn't give parents an automatic right to flexible working, employers will be required to consider requests seriously and can only refuse requests where there is a clear business reason. The new right applies to employees who have worked for their employer for 26 weeks before they make a request for flexible working. For more information you can contact Parents at Work on 020 7253 7243 or visit [www.parentsatwork.org.uk](http://www.parentsatwork.org.uk)

## GET CHILDWISE

For your free subscription to Childwise please fill in the form and post it to Daycare Trust at 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES, or fax it to us at 020 7840 3355, e-mail us on [info@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:info@daycaretrust.org.uk) or phone our helpline on 020 7840 3350 between 10am and 5pm to request a free subscription

We may occasionally contact you about other publications and services offered by us. If you do not wish to be contacted please tick

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How did you hear about Daycare Trust? \_\_\_\_\_



Daycare Trust is the national childcare charity, campaigning for quality affordable childcare for all children aged 0-14 and raising the voices of children, parents and carers. We advise parents and carers, provide employers trade unions and policymakers on childcare issues.

Registered charity number 327729. Daycare Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of the Sure Start Unit for Childwise