

# childwise

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

## Access to childcare for all

BBC Children in Need Project

Behind the headlines - quality childcare needed

Money Matters

help for students with childcare costs

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

Call our helpline 020 7840 3350



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# welcome

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

Childcare is top of the news agenda at the moment – and not always for the best reasons. In this Childwise we go behind the headlines of some recent sensationalist reporting.

## welcome to Childwise

To maintain parents' confidence in childcare, concerns about the quality of care need to be addressed promptly and effectively by Ofsted. The long term answer

to ensuring every child has access to quality childcare is to invest in quality childcarers. The childcare workforce needs to be well trained and well rewarded.

That's why we say "value children, value childcare". And that's why we hope that later this year the Government will back its ten year plan with substantial investment to make quality affordable childcare available to all children and families.

Also featured in this issue is our campaign to increase access to quality, affordable childcare and resources for parents of disabled children.



**Stephen Burke**  
Director, Daycare Trust

# ACCESS TO CHILDCARE FOR ALL



Daycare Trust has set up a project to investigate the problems that parents of children with disabilities and Special Educational Needs have in getting suitable childcare.

It's funded by BBC Children in Need, and is looking at

- The costs of childcare for children with special needs
- Parents' access to benefits and information
- Difficulties finding suitable childcare

The project has had feedback from over 400 parents and childcare providers on the availability (or lack!) of affordable and suitable childcare.

Daycare Trust will run a campaign highlighting the main findings from the research and the results will be distributed to policy makers and advisors.

For more information: Ann-Marie Nichols at Daycare Trust: 020 7840 3350 ext 237, [anichols@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:anichols@daycaretrust.org.uk). (Monday-Thursday).

## Your views wanted – early intervention for children with disabilities

Early intervention can make a real difference to the lives of young disabled children and their families. Mencap is leading a feasibility study commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to set up a national centre for early intervention.

As part of this study, a discussion forum on the Internet has been launched and Mencap wants to hear your views about how the centre will carry out its functions.

To join in the discussion email [password@earlyintervention.org.uk](mailto:password@earlyintervention.org.uk) or call 020 7696 6954 for a password. Then go to [www.earlyintervention.org.uk](http://www.earlyintervention.org.uk), click on 'e-forum' and have your say on how you want the national centre to work.



## Behind the headlines - what the research really says

A recent flurry of newspaper headlines proclaimed that day nurseries for children under two were turning children into "thugs".

The articles mainly based their claims on two reports of research into childcare. One, in America, by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development is called "Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development". The other is based in the UK, and is called "The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education".

But if you read these studies in detail, neither of them shows evidence of any long-term bad effects for children placed in nurseries from an early age.

The main conclusion of the UK study was that an earlier start in pre-school education actually meant "better intellectual development" and "improved independence, concentration and sociability" when children started school. It found that pre-school learning was particularly helpful for disadvantaged children.

If we want to ensure the highest possible quality of nursery care for all of our children, it means maintaining a high number of highly qualified nursery staff and keeping staff turnover down to an absolute minimum. This means more funding must go into childcare.

If you'd like to read the two reports yourself, they are available from websites [www.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.nichd.nih.gov) and [www.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/eppe/pdfs/eppe\\_brief2503.pdf](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/eppe/pdfs/eppe_brief2503.pdf)

**PARENTS' WEEK 2004** The fifth national Parents' Week runs from Monday October 25 to Sunday October 31 2004. It's organised by the National Family and Parenting Institute, and this year's theme is *Time for Families*. Parents' Week involves hundreds of support organisations around the UK and a central theme this year is to look at ways to make Britain more family friendly, linked to the NFPI's ten-year *Family Friendly Campaign*. To express your views, or find out more, email [info@nfpi.org](mailto:info@nfpi.org), or go to [www.nfpi.org](http://www.nfpi.org)



## BBC highlights quality concerns

A BBC documentary "Nurseries Undercover" shown on 12 August caused great worry to many parents over the kind of care their children are getting. The documentary, secretly filmed in four private nurseries, showed the breaking of regulations on staff numbers, hygiene, and checks on workers. It also showed childcare workers bullying children.

This situation is a challenge for Ofsted, the government body that regulates and inspects all nurseries. The problems the reporter found highlight the need for an efficient and effective system of regulation for the childcare sector. We need a system that is accessible and where parents are clear about what they should do if unhappy with the care of their child.

There is also a need to ensure that the childcare workforce consists of professionals who meet the current standards. They need to be trained and developed to a high level to provide good quality childcare for the nation's children. We need to ensure that the ratio of children to carers is adequate and that effective supervision exists for less experienced workers.

### Daycare Trust's advice to parents is:

- When choosing a nursery, ask to see the most recent Ofsted report. Use this as a guide, but also check the quality of care available yourself. Daycare Trust publishes a free booklet called, 'Choosing Childcare' that gives advice on the different types of childcare available, and what to look for as evidence of good quality care. Parents can also obtain information from our website [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk)

- If parents are unhappy about the care their child is receiving they should raise the issue with their child's carer, and if it's not resolved, contact Ofsted on 0845 601 4772 to get advice on their complaints procedure.

- Parents should contact the police or other relevant authorities if they believe the situation demands it.

## MONEY MATTERS - CUT OUT AND KEEP



Childwise's regular feature to keep you updated on financial support for childcare.

### Help with childcare costs for Higher Education students

#### HELP FROM YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

- The **Childcare Grant** is available for students with children in registered or approved childcare.
- The **Parents' Learning Allowance**. How much you get depends on your income and that of your dependents.
- The **Lone Parents' Grant** is for lone student parents who started their course in 2000/2001 or before, and who choose not to receive the Childcare Grant or the Parents' Learning Allowance.
- The **Assembly Learning Grant** for Welsh students includes top-ups for mature students and childcare.

For more detailed information about these grants you need the Department of Education and Skills guide "Childcare Grant and other support for student parents in higher education in 2004/5". You can get it from the DfES website: [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides), from your LEA, or by phoning 0800 731 9133.

#### HELP FROM YOUR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

- **Access to Learning Funds** (known as Financial Contingency Funds in Wales).
- Campus-based nurseries may be able to provide you with a free or subsidised place. Ask your college/university if they have one.

#### OTHER HELP

- A **Career Development Loan** can be used for childcare and other study/training related costs. For more information: contact 0800 585 505 or visit [www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl)
- The **Child Tax Credit** can help with your finances. If you're working 16 hours or more a week while studying, you might also get help from the **Working Tax Credit**. Ring the Tax Credit Helpline 0845 300 3900, or visit [www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk](http://www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk)

## More tax breaks on childcare vouchers

Do you know about the new tax breaks on childcare vouchers starting in April 2005? From that date the first £50 per week given by employers in childcare vouchers will be exempt from tax – as well as from National Insurance Contributions. For more information, speak to your employer, or go to Daycare Trust's website.



## What we can learn from other countries

Daycare Trust's conference in November is called "Towards Universal Childcare: Learning from Other Countries". International speakers from four countries will talk about how radical policy changes in the design and delivery of childcare services have made a difference to the lives of children and families in their countries. The conference is on Thursday 11 November 2004 at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London SW1. Download a booking form and an agenda from the Daycare Trust website: [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk), or phone 020 7840 3350.

# Government promises childcare for all by 2015

## dear childwise...

*I am worried about the care my child is getting at her nursery. What should I do?*

If you are worried about the kind of care provided by your nursery, the National Standards/Ofsted's guidance notes give you a clearer idea on the type and level of service you should expect from a nursery.

These guidance notes are on the Surestart website at [www.surestart.gov.uk](http://www.surestart.gov.uk) or on the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

You can also find information and advice about quality and standards in childcare on Daycare Trust's website at [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk).

If you have concerns about the care your child is getting, this should be raised with the nursery management in the first instance. Many issues can be resolved at an early stage in this way.

If you have already approached your nursery's manager, and are still not satisfied, you can contact the Ofsted complaints line on 0845 601 4772. Ofsted will investigate complaints and will feed back the results to you.

If a child's safety is at risk or there are child protection issues, you should remove your child immediately, contact the Child Protection Team at your local Social Services department, then contact the Ofsted complaints line and let them know what you have done.

*Yours, Childwise*

DAYCARE TRUST WARMLY WELCOMES THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE 21ST CENTURY AS "THE ERA OF UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS SERVICES".



In his Comprehensive Spending Review in July, the Chancellor promised the Government would create 120,000 new childcare places, and allocate an extra £100 million to create 2,500 children's centres by 2008. The increase in children's centres means 70 per cent of low-income families will have access to the childcare, health advice and other support offered by the centres.

As well as more childcare places and children's centres, the Chancellor said the government would pilot the extension of free nursery education to two-year olds.

The Chancellor also promised that the Government would extend the Bookstart scheme, which provides babies from disadvantaged communities with free books and a library card to encourage reading from an early age.

The Government is to publish a ten-year plan in November which will show how quality affordable childcare will be funded and delivered for all families by 2015.

## "NEW ERA FOR UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE"

A new report from Daycare Trust sets out a radical vision of the future where childcare becomes the right of every child and every family can find quality childcare close to their home and at a price they can afford. The report, "A new era for universal childcare?" is published prior to the publication of the Government's ten-year plan for childcare and early years services in November, and challenges the Government to consider what sort of future we want for our children. You can get a copy of the report (cost £10) by ringing Daycare Trust on 020 7840 3350, or emailing [info@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:info@daycaretrust.org.uk)

**Website helps parents share childcare costs** *[www.sharingcare.co.uk](http://www.sharingcare.co.uk) is a website that puts parents in touch with each other so that they can share their childcare needs, making childcare more affordable and more flexible. A parent going to the website can search by postcode for other families willing to share their childcare. The website means you can get better access to childminders, you can share a full-time nursery place, and you can share the cost of a nanny, by sharing the nanny's cost or time with another family. Parents who register are automatically told of care partners in their area, and the service is free to anyone registering before 31 October 2004.*

## 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 020 7840 3355, e-mail [info@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:info@daycaretrust.org.uk) or phone our helpline on 020 7840 3350.

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

Name

Address

Contact number

How did you hear about Daycare Trust?



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

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