



**Department
for Education**

DWP

**Department for
Work and Pensions**

Call for evidence

**Launch date 19 July 2012
Respond by 31 August 2012
Ref: Department for Education**

Commission on childcare: call for evidence

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Sarah Teather, Minister for Children and Families, and Maria Miller, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions are leading a commission on childcare announced by the Prime Minister on 19 June. The commission is looking at how to reduce the costs of childcare for working families, and burdens on childcare providers, without compromising the safety or quality of provision. This call for evidence will inform the work of the commission which will report in the autumn. It particularly seeks views from parents and carers, those working in the sector, owners and managers of settings, schools, employers, and organisations with an interest in child development, safety, labour market and employment matters.

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Issued 19 July 2012

Enquiries To If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the call for evidence you can telephone: 0370 000 2288 or e-mail: childcare.commission@education.gsi.gov.uk

Contact details

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can telephone: 0370 000 2288 or use the ['Contact us'](#) page.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Affordability and availability of childcare are central to enabling parents to work sufficient hours to support their families. On 19 June the Prime Minister announced a commission to look at how to reduce the costs of childcare for working families and burdens on childcare providers, without compromising the safety or quality of provision. The commission will draw on the views of parents, a wide range of experts in the field and international evidence on high quality, affordable childcare.

- 1.2 This call for evidence will inform the work of the commission which will report in the autumn. It particularly seeks views from parents, those working in the sector, owners and managers of settings, schools, employers, and organisations with an interest in child development, safety, labour market or employment matters.
- 1.3 The commission is jointly led by Sarah Teather, Minister for Children and Families, Department for Education and Maria Miller, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions. It will look broadly at relevant issues and particularly consider three key themes:
- **Theme 1:** Ways to encourage the provision of wrap around and holiday childcare for children of school age.
 - **Theme 2:** Identifying any regulation that burdens childcare providers unnecessarily because it is not needed for reasons of quality or safety.
 - **Theme 3:** How childcare supports families to move into sustained employment and out of poverty.
- 1.4 The Government wants to ensure the system of support for childcare costs delivers high quality at good value, for children, parents and the taxpayer. The Government invests nearly £2 billion each year to help parents with the cost of childcare, mostly through Working Tax Credit. Investment will increase by a further £300 million when support is delivered through Universal Credit, which will for the first time provide access to financial support for people who work less than 16 hours a week. Further financial support of around £800 million is provided through tax and national insurance relief on employer-supported childcare, which includes childcare vouchers, directly contracted childcare and workplace nurseries.
- 1.5 Since September 2010 all three and four year olds have had the right to 15 hours a week of free early education. This right will be extended to around 260,000 two year olds from September 2014, when total investment in the free entitlement will exceed £2.5 billion a year. While the primary purpose of the free entitlement is children's development, it also helps parents balance work and family life.

2 Theme 1: Ways to encourage the provision of wrap around and holiday childcare for children of school age

- 2.1 Parents need accessible and affordable childcare as their children grow up. We know that many parents have particular difficulty in finding childcare for older children before and after school and during the holidays. Department for Education research shows that only four out of ten parents believe that there is sufficient childcare in their area for children aged five and over. **Theme 1** of the commission will look at ways to encourage the provision of wrap around and holiday care for children of school age. This will include looking at: how to encourage more schools to follow the example of many Free Schools and academies in finding innovative ways to extend the school day before and after usual hours; enabling parents and volunteers to set up the schemes they want in their area; and partnerships between schools and voluntary and private childcare providers.

To inform the commission's work in this area, we would welcome views on:

Q1. What wrap around and holiday provision do parents need that they are not currently easily able to access?

Q2. What barriers exist that make it more difficult to provide high quality and affordable wrap around and holiday care for children, particularly those aged five and over? How can these be overcome?

Q3. What are the main barriers to parents setting up or getting involved in running before and after-school activities and holiday schemes? How might these be addressed?

Q4. What role can schools play to help parents access the before and after-school and holiday provision they need?

3 Theme 2: Identifying any regulation that burdens childcare providers unnecessarily because it is not needed for reasons of quality or safety

- 3.1 The Government wants to achieve the right balance with regulation. Parents quite rightly expect no compromise on the quality of provision. When a parent leaves their child in the care of a nursery, childminder, after-school or holiday club, they must be confident that their child will be safe and happy. Regulation should exist to ensure that quality care and

development is on offer and that children are safe. But regulation can sometimes act to restrict professional judgement, take professionals away from working directly with children and limit the potential for creative practice and flexibility. That is why the Government has already significantly slimmed down the Early Years Foundation Stage for this September and why it is committed to continuing to seek further opportunities to reduce burdens on providers and remove unnecessary regulation and paperwork which does not support high quality and/or risks undermining professionals' ability to protect children and promote their development. **Theme Two** of the commission will assess the impact of regulation. Where regulation exists that adds unnecessary burdens or costs to providers or reduces their capacity to operate flexibly, but does not promote quality or safety, the Government will take action to remove it.

To inform the commission's work in this area, we would welcome views on:

Q5. What early education, childcare or other regulation unnecessarily gets in the way of the delivery of flexible, affordable, safe and high quality provision, or its expansion?

Q6. How could existing regulation be improved?

Q7. Which aspects of requirements for providers do parents consider worthwhile? Or unnecessary?

Q8. Are there any aspects of regulation which, in your view, make childcare more costly than it need be? Please explain your answer.

4 Theme 3: How childcare supports families to move into sustained employment and out of poverty

- 4.1 We know that there are many factors which influence the decisions that parents make about their working lives. **Theme 3** of the commission will look at how childcare supports families to move into sustained employment and out of poverty. It will consider: the influence that childcare costs have on employment decisions; whether this is different at key transition points (for example when children start their free early education entitlement and when they start school); and the implementation of existing government support to help parents with childcare costs.

To inform the commission's work in this area, we would welcome views on:

Q9. What are the main issues parents face when making decisions

about work, either entering work, or increasing their hours, in relation to childcare? Do some families face particular challenges, such as low or middle-income families, or families with disabled children?

Q10. When are the key transition or tipping points, and what are the main issues at those times?

Q11. What do employers do well and what further role could employers play in supporting parents with their childcare needs?

Q12. How do parents access information and support relating to childcare, from local authorities or elsewhere? How could information or support services be improved?

Q13. How effectively is existing government support to help parents participate in work being delivered?

5 How to respond

- 5.1 You can respond to the call for evidence by completing the response form and emailing it to childcare.commission@education.gsi.gov.uk or sending it by post to:

CYPFD Team, Department for Education, Floor 1C, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ.

6 Additional copies

- 6.1 Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from the Department for Education e-consultation website at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>

7 Plans for making results public

- 7.1 The commission on childcare will report in the autumn.