



Dear Senedd Committee,

We are writing to you in reference to the Petition to 'Offer Welsh working parents the same financial support for childcare as England'.

We find the petition problematic in its wording in that it refers to commitments made to provide an extension to the current childcare offer in England which are yet to become reality, and the majority of which will likely be the responsibility of a newly formed government following the upcoming (as yet to be scheduled) general election.

The petition highlights the complexity of the Welsh Government's childcare offer, comprising a range of services including the 30 hours childcare offer for 3-4-year-olds and the Flying Start offer for 2-year-olds.

Parents are under extreme pressure, and the UK has one of the most expensive childcare systems in the world. According to 2022 OECD figures, the UK has the third most expensive childcare, with only the Czech Republic and New Zealand more expensive in net childcare costs.ⁱ

Figures show that one in three young mums were forced to leave a job because they could not afford childcare.ⁱⁱ

Oxfam Cymru research, to be released in coming weeks, shows families are struggling with the cost of childcare:

- A staggering 91.7% (306/334) of parents either agree or strongly agree that childcare costs are too high compared to their income.
- 53% (178/334) of parents said that it doesn't make financial sense for them to go to work after paying for childcare.
- 39% (130/333) of the participants agree or strongly agree that they haven't been able to pay other essential costs after paying for childcare.

Childcare is a critical social infrastructure for our society and economy, impacting multiple dimensions. Beyond its role in shaping the future generation, childcare also plays a pivotal role in workforce participation, enabling parents, especially mothers, to maintain or re-enter the workforce, contributing significantly to economic productivity and financial independence.

Moreover, childcare fosters social inclusion by offering support to families of diverse backgrounds and income levels, helping to bridge socio-economic gaps. Recognizing childcare's multifaceted importance is crucial as it not only empowers children but also empowers communities and economies, ultimately shaping the trajectory of our society for generations to come.

Childcare remains one of the main reasons for women to be economically inactive. More women are economically inactive in Wales, 25.5% of economically inactive women are out of work due to "looking after family/home", compared to only 6.8% of men.



Yet, childcare support and offers remain insufficient to overcome this inequality.

Our upcoming research presents some staggering figures in relation to childcare and parent's employment:

- 53.3% (178/334) of parents said that after paying for childcare, it doesn't make financial sense for them to go to work.
- 66% (221/334) of the parents said due to childcare costs, they did not have any disposal income/savings.
- 67% (106/158) of the parents/carers said that they would have returned to work or increased working hours quicker if more funded childcare had been available.
- 74% (247/334) of the parents agreed that lack of funded childcare has had a negative impact on their work or career.

This petition has shone a light on the need for the Welsh Government to provide clear and detailed plans on how they will support families struggling to survive with the insurmountable cost of childcare. The interest in this petition, at a time when families were juggling a busy summer holiday period, shows the strength of public interest in this matter, and how they are looking for a solution that helps all families as soon as is practicable.

Kind regards

Sarah Rees
Head of Oxfam Cymru

ⁱ OECD (2022), Net Childcare Costs

ⁱⁱ <https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/our-research/childcare-what-young-women-want/>