

Free childcare policy in the UK

Introduction

What is the free childcare policy?

This means that in the UK, if a family has a 3-4-year-old child. They can enjoy the service of the government to help them and let their children go to nurseries or other childcare institutions. This service is free, but there is a certain time limit.

Why is this policy coming?

This policy was first introduced for children from low-income families. Since then, the policy has been free for children aged 3-4 in 2010. I think 2010 is important. I think there may be some social background to introduce.

What happens before 2010?

1. The global financial crisis in 2008.
2. The cost of childcare continues to grow.

Therefore, for the government, the policy they announced can let more labor force enter the market to work. that is the reason why they need the parents who want to enjoy this service to work at least 16 hours per week. (Make sure they can work for the society.)

And what is the benefit/aim of this policy?

1. labor
2. Early childhood education is beneficial to young children.
3. Some folks discuss the equality of women in the job market.

Text.

There are four regions in Britain. Checking different policies, I think the timeline can show what is the most important part in different areas.

Through the timeline, it can be found that England's policy is leadership, and Scotland can keep up with England's steps. But they use 1140 hours per year Perhaps more flexible.

(GOV.WALES) Welsh policies can follow up, but it is worth noting that the Flying Start program is specially designed for low-income families and special children. It can be seen that different institutions are responsible for different priorities. In addition, there are different plans for the 30 hours in Wales:

1. including at least 10 hours of early education.

2. up to 20 hours of childcare.

This reflects the view that the government attaches importance to early education.

(Nidirect.Gov) Northern Ireland's policy is unclear and slow. Hard to find the specific handbook to introduce how they can have the service. They provide a one-year service for children to make sure they have preschool education.

Challenge

Insufficient government funds

Insufficient educational resources

Shortage of Teachers

Quota shortage

Increased pressure on the profitability of childcare institutions

Advice

Increase government subsidies

Optimize the ratio of teachers and students

Childcare reform in 2023: the plan increases the number of two-year-old children that approved nannies can care for at the same time. From September 2023, one staff member will be allowed to take care of five children, while the current rule is four children. Scotland has already done so (Berg,2024).

Support preschool teacher training and facility development

Promoting private sector participation in policy services

Encourage flexible employment

Support for families without quota

Improve policy transparency and management efficiency

Berg, V. (2024). *A guide to free childcare in Northern Ireland for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds*. [online] Daynurseries.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/advice/a-guide-to-free-childcare-in-northern-ireland-for-2-3-and-4-year-olds> (Accessed 9 Nov. 2024).

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Nidirect.gov. (2015). *Pre-school education places*. [online] Available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/pre-school-education-places> (Accessed 12 Nov. 2024).

Scottish Government (2019). *Early education and care: Early learning and childcare expansion - gov.scot*. [online] Gov.scot. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/early-education-and-care/early-learning-and-childcare/> (Accessed 10 Nov. 2024).