



REC Childcare

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation's (REC's) specialist Childcare sector group represents agencies who find childcare staff, domestic workers, nannies and au pairs. It brings together members working within the sector to discuss and resolve the wide-ranging issues facing the industry, such as the impact of the changing early years environment, the sector's relationship with the Disclosure and Barring Service and Ofsted, and the growing need for flexible and affordable childcare.

Sector challenges

Childcare costs

The cost of childcare has continued to rise and gaps in the provision of services are still in need of attention. Research has found that parents in the UK spend 26% of their net household income on childcare compared to an average of 12% in another 33 developed countries.¹ A lack of affordable childcare has also been identified as a major barrier to employment. A survey of parents found that around 20% were considering giving up work or reducing their hours because of childcare costs.² Members have stated that they feel nannies are not taken seriously as part of the childcare workforce and that they could play a role in achieving an affordable childcare solution for working families. Acknowledgement by the government of the role nanny agencies play is vital in ensuring families have access to the affordable childcare they need.



Parents in the UK spend 26% of their net household income on childcare

"The REC Childcare sector group provides specialist support and advice to a wide range of agencies who deal with a range of occupations and roles. The group is committed to raising standards in the industry and will continue to work to provide a strong voice for the sector."

Judith Wayne,
Chair of the REC Childcare sector group

Regulation

The REC has long stated that a comprehensive regulatory framework for registered and qualified nannies should play a part in any overhaul of the UK's childcare system. Nannies are not currently subject to the same registration requirements that apply to other childcarers. Various campaigns call for the registration of all childcarers in the UK, including nannies. Holding nannies to the same registration requirements will further improve childcare standards, advance levels of safeguarding for children and create a level playing field in the industry for the various forms of childcare available.

A diminishing workforce?

The population in the UK is growing rapidly. Despite the fact that births in England and Wales have slightly decreased, the number of births is still above average for the last decade.³ Research shows that 78% of families with dependent children are using at least one form of childcare⁴ and 34% of single parents use at least three providers;⁵ it is evident that maintenance of the childcare workforce is as important as ever. There are no accurate figures for the number of nannies and au pairs working in the UK (estimates range from 30,000 to 89,000⁶), but statistics released in October 2014 showed that childminder numbers had decreased from 51,789 to 50,416.⁷ Given that childminders are the most commonly used form of childcare,⁸ these figures are understandably concerning. It is clear that workforce

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expansion is needed to cope with changes in population and developments in working patterns in the UK, whilst new solutions are required to meet both current and expected demand.

Policy focus

Delivering 30 hours of free childcare

There are many challenges facing the government's drive to deliver parents' 30 hours of free childcare under the early years entitlement. A survey has shown that almost 70% of childcare providers say they have no plans to grow their businesses over the course of 2015/2016 and that over a quarter are less confident in the future of their business than they were 12 months ago.⁹ The results of the survey present major barriers to the government's agenda in doubling the number of free childcare hours. The plan has been costed at £350m a year but it has been suggested that childcare providers are already facing funding shortfalls of around 20% and that the figure costed by the government is a quarter of what may actually be needed.¹⁰ Pilots of the 30 hour scheme will begin from September 2016 and the REC will actively monitor any impact the roll-out may have on the childcare industry.

The importance of childcare

With more parents working full-time and for longer hours, there is increased demand for childcare. Although we are all encouraged to achieve a good 'work-life balance', the figures tell a different story: nearly 80% of respondents to the Modern Families Index stated that work impacted on spending time with their children and 27% of parents said they felt resentful towards their employer about their work-family balance.¹¹

Getting the childcare system right also affects businesses and the UK's economy. 59% of parents would consider what a promotion meant for their childcare arrangements before applying for the role¹² and around two thirds of mothers say the cost of childcare is an obstacle to them working more.¹³ Even with the introduction of schemes such as Shared Parental Leave, many parents may still rely on more 'traditional' childcare arrangements. Reliability, affordability and choice in childcare are all essential in enabling families to contribute to the economy and in trying to achieve the right work-life balance.

To help address these issues, the REC will continue to push for better recognition of nannies and for registration for the whole childcare workforce.



Two thirds of mothers say the cost of childcare is an obstacle to them working more



Find out more

To find out more about joining REC Childcare, visit our [sector page](#).

www.rec.uk.com/childcare

¹ *Doing Better for Families*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011 ² *Survey of 1000 parents with children aged between 0-6*, 4Children and Opinium, January 2015 ³ *Births in England and Wales in 2014*, Office for National Statistics, July 2015 ⁴ *Childcare and early years survey of parents*, Department for Education, January 2014 ⁵ *Paying the Price: The Childcare challenge*, Gingerbread, March 2015 ⁶ *Quality Childcare: Improving early years childcare*, Policy Exchange, 2013 ⁷ *Registered childcare providers and places in England in August 2014*, Ofsted, November 2014 ⁸ *Modern Families Index Report 2015*, Working Families, January 2015 ⁹ *Building blocks: a report on the state of the childcare and early years sector*, PACEY, June 2015 ¹⁰ *Counting the cost: an analysis of delivery costs for funded early years education and childcare*, Ceeda and the Pre-school Learning Alliance, October 2014 ¹¹ *Modern Families Index Report 2015*, Working Families, January 2015 ¹² *Ibid.* ¹³ *Careers and carers: childcare and maternal labour supply*, Resolution Foundation, January 2014

