

How can the government ensure high-quality, affordable 'childcare'?

- **Increase public investment** to the OECD average over the next 5 years, making public funding conditional on quality. No child should be in a low quality service, and no public money should go to services that fail to achieve quality standards.
- **Continue progress to a Second Free Pre-School Year** but with a reformed model of funding.
- **Reduce costs for families** by having income related subsidies in all services (including childminders). Avoid tax-based funding, which will do nothing for quality.
- **Move to cap fees** so that increased costs aren't passed onto parents.



'Child care is a profession... I do not like to see this referred to as a business, a sector or an industry. Unfortunately for some, that is what it has turned into.'

An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D., speaking in the Dáil on 29th May 2013, the day after the RTÉ Prime Time investigation, *A Breach of Trust*.



www.startstrong.ie

Basement,
33. Merrion Street Upper,
Dublin 2.

Tel (01) 6624018
Fax (01) 6624378
Email info@startstrong.ie

facebook.com/StartStrongIreland
@StartStrongIrl

Start Strong is a coalition of organisations and individuals committed to advancing high quality care and education for all young children in Ireland.

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'Childcare' – Business or Profession?



'Childcare' – a profession not a business

Early care and education in Ireland is run on a 'market' model, with very little public investment. This results in variable quality and fees that are unaffordable for parents. It's just not good enough.

To change this we need to see that early care and education is a public service. We need to stop treating it as a business suited to a 'market', and recognise that it is a profession charged with the care and education of our children.

We need a new model of 'childcare'

Parents in Ireland pay some of the highest costs in the world for 'childcare'. At the same time, the high price doesn't guarantee high quality.

With an election looming, there is a lot of political talk of what can be done to improve the situation. But that talk seems to be all about the cost of childcare, forgetting that the government needs to make sure families should have a guarantee about the quality of care too. A new model of 'childcare' is needed.

**Tax credits
won't lead to
any improvement
in quality**

Direct investment, not tax credits

We need to directly invest in pre-school services. If we subsidise the cost of 'childcare' places, parents pay less. And by making the funding conditional on high-quality we can make sure children benefit.

Tax credits are not the solution as they will do nothing to improve quality, and won't help families on the lowest incomes who aren't in the tax net.

Our schools are recognised as a public service and funded through direct public investment. We need to think about funding our early years services in the same way.

Some more facts

- Despite the high cost of 'childcare' to parents, many 'childcare' workers earn just above the minimum wage and have to go on the dole for the summer.
- Public investment in Ireland's pre-school services amounts to less than 0.2% GDP. The average investment in OECD countries is 0.8% GDP. The international benchmark for high-quality early years provision is 1% GDP.
- Research shows the clear benefits of high quality early care and education for children, society and the economy. High quality care and education can lead to higher employment rates and earnings as well as better social and emotional skills.

