

Drive to reduce the cost of childcare for parents

The government has today announced ambitious new plans to improve the cost, choice and availability of childcare that will benefit hundreds of thousands of parents across the country.

The UK has some of the highest-quality childcare provision in the world with 96% of early years settings rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding, but it is also one of the biggest costs facing working families today. This means some families, in particular women, feel they are not able to return to the workplace after giving birth due to the high cost of putting their child into paid care.

With the cost of living continuing to rise, the government is committed to doing everything it can to support families with their finances while keeping people in high-wage, secure jobs that help grow the economy. New plans are being set out today to ensure high-quality and affordable childcare is accessible to all.

To drive down costs for providers and parents, a new consultation will look at increasing the number of children that can be looked after by each staff member in early years settings.

It will propose changing staff-to-child ratios from 1:4 to 1:5 for two-year-olds, giving providers more flexibility in how they run their businesses while maintaining safety and quality of care. Childcare for children aged 0-2 is the most expensive for providers to deliver, largely given the need for higher supervision levels.

This could potentially eventually reduce the cost of this form of childcare by up to 15%, or up to £40 per week for a family paying £265 per week for care for their 2-year-old, if providers adopt the changes and pass all the savings on to parents.

Education Secretary, Nadhim Zahawi said:

Every child deserves a great start in life and that means giving families the support they need.

Childcare is an integral part of our economy, and these reforms prove again that this government is on the side of working families. I'm hugely grateful to the thousands of dedicated early years professionals who provide daily care and education to our youngest children, which is why I am determined to support them by giving them greater flexibility in how they run their services.

This in turn will support thousands of families across the country, helping to develop children's skills while also supporting parents

into work.

The government will also increase choice and affordability for parents by taking action to open up the childminder market.

While early years settings such as nurseries are the most popular option for families, childminders are generally the most affordable and flexible form of childcare. While the average cost of a two-year-old attending a nursery for 50 hours a week in England is £265 per week, this compares to £236 with a childminder. The government will support more people to become childminders by:

- Reducing the upfront costs of becoming a childminder via financial support;
- Allowing childminders to spend more of their time working from a greater range of locations – for example a local community centre or village hall rather than their own home;
- Giving childminders greater flexibilities within the ratios when looking after their own children or siblings of other children;
- Working with Ofsted to reduce inspection of childminders; and
- Slimming down the childminder specific Early Years Foundation Stage, reducing the framework by one-third to ensure content is targeted and simpler to navigate.

Government will streamline the Ofsted registration process for providers. More providers registering would mean that parents have a wider choice of providers on which to use these schemes, to pay for childcare that supports their working lives.

The government will also encourage the growth of Childminder Agencies (CMAs). CMAs could ultimately become major players in the childcare market – stimulating competition and driving down costs while providing parents with more options for care. CMAs are central bodies that remove the individual administrative and regulatory burden on childminders, as well as often providing parents with tools such as mobile apps through which to book their childcare.

Minister for Children and Families Will Quince said:

I'm proud of the excellent quality of childcare and early education in England, which is a huge asset to working parents. But too many are struggling to balance work with childcare costs.

We know there are thousands of parents who are eligible for government support but not taking it up. That's why we want to increase awareness of the existing childcare offers, allow providers to provide services more flexibly and make sure funding gets where it is needed most.

Also announced today is an additional £10 million investment for Maintained

Nursery Schools, into the supplementary funding they receive from 2023-24. These settings often care for some of the most disadvantaged children in the country and have additional costs that other early years settings do not – such as the requirement to have a headteacher – because they are constituted as schools.

Since the introduction of the Early Years National Funding Formula in 2017, the government has provided supplementary funding for these nurseries to protect their funding levels.

This additional funding forms part of a separate consultation on plans to reform how early years funding is distributed around England, to ensure the system is fair, effective and responsive to changing levels of need.

The government has spent more than £4 billion each year for the last five years helping families with the cost of childcare, but almost one million eligible families have not taken up their right to Tax-Free Childcare, which is worth £2,000 per year or £4,000 for children with disabilities. Universal Credit Childcare allows families to reclaim 85% of their childcare costs, worth up to £1,108 per month.

The government is also driving a renewed campaign via [the Childcare Choices website](#) so parents can access the support they are entitled to, through a ramped-up marketing campaign backed by £1.2 million, which launched last week. This will also encourage providers to take the necessary steps to offer the full range of childcare support to parents using their services.

Exchequer Secretary Helen Whately said:

Tax-Free Childcare provides a helping hand with childcare costs for working families but thousands of parents could be missing out.

With almost one million families eligible, I want to encourage parents to take advantage of this support of up to £2,000 per year for each child.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Thérèse Coffey said:

We want more people to take up Universal Credit childcare financial support that is available now to help working families. We also want more childcare providers to register with Ofsted and unlock more places that can be subsidised to help with the cost of living.

The government also offers 15 hours per week of free childcare or early education for all 3- and 4-year-olds, rising to 30 hours for working families, and 15 hours for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.

The Government recently announced that eight million of the most vulnerable households (around a third of all UK households) will receive £1,200 this

year and all families will receive £400 – this is on top of changes to Universal Credit, National Living Wage and National Insurance thresholds, so that people keep more of what they earn.

This takes total government cost of living support to over £37 billion – higher than other major economies around the world.

Gemma, from Portsmouth, a mum of one uses Tax-Free Childcare. She said:

As a working mum, it can be tough balancing childcare. But Tax-Free Childcare allows me to free up cash that can cover the costs of other things – when you're talking about saving 20% of your childcare costs it can make a big difference.

The Government has recently launched a new website which brings government support on offer together in one place so the public can see what support they could be eligible for: www.gov.uk/costoflivingsupport

Featuring on radio, social media and bus stop advertising, the [campaign](#) aims to increase parents' awareness and understanding of the childcare support available to them from the government, and maximise the number of people who take up our offer. This will coincide with the school summer holidays, maximising take up over the long break and beyond.

The campaign will signpost to parents, bringing together in one place the support available through Universal Credit, Tax-Free Childcare and 15-30 hours free childcare, clearly setting out eligibility requirements and providing a handy calculator so parents can estimate their entitlement. We will also look at simplifying the website further to make it as easy as possible for parents to understand the support available.

Universal Credit's childcare offer can save families hundreds of pounds each month – for example, a single parent with a young child who works in social care three days a week could benefit by around £500 a month if they claimed support for their childcare costs.

Tax-Free Childcare helps working families, including the self-employed, to reduce their household costs and keep more of what they earn. Working parents with annual salaries of up to £100,000 can get up to £2,000 of childcare support each year, or £4,000 for children with disabilities.

Recent Tax-Free Childcare statistics from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have revealed that 512,415 families received up to £2,000 towards the cost of their childcare during the 2021 to 2022 tax year, up from 374,135 in the previous year. More than 384,000 families used Tax-Free Childcare in March 2022 – the highest monthly number of families recorded using the scheme since it was launched in April 2017.

The announcements follow visits by Children's Minister Will Quince to the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Scotland – whose staff:child ratios for two-year-olds the consultation launched today seeks to mirror.

The Government will also explore how to improve recruitment and retention of staff in the sector, giving parents as much confidence in the care their child receives as possible.

[Aviation security checks accelerated as government helps industry minimise travel disruption](#)

- government has accelerated the national security vetting checks that all new aviation recruits must undergo, with Accreditation Checks being completed in around 5 days on average and Counter Terrorist Checks in under 10 days
- helps industry to get new employees, such as x-ray screeners, into the industry as quickly as possible, so it can meet the surge in demand for flights
- follows the government's 22-point plan for helping the industry tackle disruption, announced last week

Statistics show mandatory aviation sector national security checks are being processed in record time, as the industry works to rapidly fill vacancies in the face of heightened demand for flights this summer.

The government has introduced a range of measures to help process security checks as quickly as possible, resulting in around 97% of Accreditation Checks being completed in around 5 days on average, with Counter Terrorist Checks (CTC) in the Aviation sector being processed in under 10 days on average. This is a reduction from the 20-day average turnaround for CTC checks in March, before the priority measures for aviation sector applications were introduced.

The government has also already provided flexibility for employers to begin training new staff on certain modules while their background checks are ongoing, further speeding up the onboarding process, and is allowing HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) employment history letters to be used as a suitable form of reference check.

Stringent checks are required on all new aviation employees before they can start work, with the UK being a world leader in aviation security. With passengers experiencing last-minute cancellations and delays as a result of the aviation industry struggling to recruit enough staff in time to meet the current surge in demand, the government has focused on delivering these checks as quickly as possible without compromising security to help ensure people don't experience a repeat of the disruption at Easter during the summer holidays.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

These statistics demonstrate how the government is doing its bit to help deliver for passengers; now the industry must fulfil its responsibilities.

People have made huge sacrifices during the pandemic and deserve their flights to run on time, without complications, and without being cancelled last minute. While this is a challenging time for the sector, it is not acceptable for the current disruption to continue as we head into the summer peak. The public deserves to know now whether or not their flight will run over the summer, and so I reiterate my call for the industry to commit to deliver the flights they have scheduled, or to cancel them well in advance so people can make other arrangements.

Building on our 22-point plan to help the industry minimise disruption, we will continue to do everything in our power to ensure this summer is a great success for the British public.

The government announced a [22-point plan](#) last week designed to ensure passengers don't face a summer of disruption. This includes measures to help the industry recruit and train staff and ensure the delivery of realistic summer schedules.

Ministers have rejected calls to issue temporary visas for aviation workers, with staff shortages not being exclusive to the UK, but happening across Europe and the US too. Similar schemes in other sectors experiencing shortages, such as the HGV sector, have not been widely used and have not significantly contributed towards a solution.

Instead, the government is committed to building a resilient, well-paid British workforce, which will prove a far more effective, sustainable and long-term solution. To support this, government has already launched the [Aviation Skills Retention Platform](#) to help develop and hold onto UK workers.

Schools in Scotland and Northern Ireland are breaking up for summer, firing the starting gun on the busy summer holiday period – over 100 days after all remaining COVID-19 restrictions on international travel from the UK were lifted.

[Lord Ahmad: Our support for Ukraine](#)

must not waver

Madam President, Secretary General, Your Excellencies, Lords, Ladies & Gentlemen, welcome to the United Kingdom and welcome to Birmingham.

It is a great honour to be here together with Mr Speaker, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, in welcoming you to both our country and our second city.

In my introduction it was said that I am, amongst other things, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and we're looking forward to welcoming 56 countries of the Commonwealth to our sporting event a few weeks from now.

It is also a real honour to welcome all of you. John Whittingdale and I have known each other many years and it was interesting for him to raise the British weather. Part of my title includes 'Wimbledon' where some of you will notice that there's a small tournament is going on. I notice the Ambassador from Kazakhstan is here and is a great tennis player. Wimbledon without rain is a non event so it was no surprise to see the weather here.

As the UK Minister with a wide range of responsibilities it's a huge honour to be the Minister responsible for the OSCE. And to John and the whole of the UK Delegation, I pay tribute to them for their absolute devotion and dedication to the OSCE. I thank them also for their valuable insights they provide to me.

I've seen myself through working with the OSCE, its incredible work, from military transparency, to human rights, to democracy and the environment. The list goes on. But as all of us realise – indeed His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales in his letter to the OSCE reflects on this very issue – today the work and objectives of the OSCE are under greater threat than at any time in its history. And it is for all of us, irrespective of the role we play, to stand up and defend them.

This is why I am delighted to have this opportunity, not only to welcome you to the UK, but to address you, colleagues from across parliament, as to your role which for all of us is extremely vital.

Together, all countries – the UK, our allies across the world – have demonstrated strength and unity in our response to Mr Putin's barbaric, premeditated invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

For our part in the UK, whether it's diplomacy, humanitarian support, economic reconstruction – indeed the Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss will be attending the Lugano conference next week on this very objective – or indeed standing with Ukraine through support of its military, we stand with Ukraine.

We also continue to support Ukraine. We have colleagues from across different parties, different perspectives here in the UK and across other countries. But one thing I can say with absolute confidence – and I am grateful to colleagues and Shadow Ministers from Her Majesty's opposition – that when it comes to the issue of Ukraine we are absolutely at one. There is no

difference and nor should there be.

The UK stands firm in our support to Ukraine in its fight, and have committed £1.3 billion in military aid and operational support, including support for weapons.

Our economic and humanitarian support totals nearly £400 million. It includes food, medical supplies and shelter kits.

And as the UK Minister for sanctions, we are also ensuring that Mr Putin's regime pays an economic price for its actions, and we have now sanctioned more than 1,000 individuals and 100 entities.

But it is important when we look to act in this particular way – particularly when it comes to the issue of sanctions – that we stand together with our allies and friends from across the world. For sanctions really hit hard when we work together as one.

This unprovoked, illegal war is, of course, far more than an attack on Ukraine. It is also an attack on the very founding principles of the OSCE. The pillars on which European security has been built.

Russia appears to believe that these principles designed to keep us all safe – principles that all sides agreed to, even during the Cold War, and yes, by Russia itself – are no longer in its interest.

Simply put, this is a tragedy.

Yet, even as Russia flagrantly disregards commitments itself signed up to – including the Minsk agreement – the OSCE is still proving its value.

Prior to the invasion, we drew heavily on its confidence-building measures in an effort together to avert this crisis.

The UK strongly supported Ukraine in its use of the Vienna Document, giving Russia the opportunity to explain its build-up of troops.

Yet tragically, every week since the invasion – notwithstanding the fact that we have gathered around the table in Vienna to hold Russia to account – Russia is still continuing its assault on Ukraine.

The UK has twice joined the majority of OSCE states in triggering the Moscow Mechanism, launching missions to document the impacts of the invasion.

As you know, the first report from April exposed the true face of Mr Putin's war, revealing widespread human rights and humanitarian law violations by Russian troops.

The credible evidence the independent experts found of war crimes, from torture and killing of innocent civilians. And as we meet today Madam President, yet again in the last week we have seen a shopping centre with innocent civilians attacked. And this morning, again we heard further assaults and heard news of credible attacks yet again on the port city of

Odesa and its surrounding areas. Russia is attacking and seeking to instil further fear in the innocent civilians of Ukraine, trying to disable its lifelines.

The report that the OSCE has conducted, and those of other independent authorities including the UN, have also captured accounts of devastating sexual violence. This is an issue close to my heart as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We must work together to ensure that there is no impunity for those perpetrators who commit these crimes and they will be held to account.

I had the opportunity to visit Poland in recent months where I paid tribute to the Polish Government and other Governments around Ukraine who are providing vital support. I met directly with those fleeing – young women especially, who were the majority of cases, the elderly, young children fleeing the war – and sitting down with them. There were many poignant moments but there was one particular incident which stays with me – that of a young boy who followed me around one of the centres where Ukrainians were being housed and supported. He was the age of one of my own children, only 10 years old. He kept with us and I liked his resilience. We didn't speak the same language but I knew he was taken by the fact that someone was visiting. Equally reflecting all the countries represented here and beyond was the important issue which he said to me, that you being here meant you care.

I didn't have anything to give him but a smile, then I remembered my lapel badge of a Union Jack, which I knelt down and gave to him. This young child who had lost everything didn't know what to do. He smiled, took it gratefully and then disappeared. Five minutes later he returned with a key ring with a Georgian flag on it – the George's cross. Through a translator he explained that in Ukrainian tradition and hospitality, when you are presented with a gift, you give a gift. And that, your excellencies captures the spirit of Ukraine, and of its children. The reason we are standing up for Ukraine today. We must never lose sight of that vital effort.

In March, the UK led efforts to ensure those perpetrators are held to account, and together we other countries we referred the situation in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court, which has now secured the support of 42 other countries.

I am glad that the ICC investigation is now underway, under the ICC Prosecutor, Karim Khan. And again the UK is playing its part to assist and work with all other internal and international investigations to ensure we can provide justice.

We will also support efforts by the Ukrainian authorities to investigate war crimes, in particular conflict-related sexual violence.

At tomorrow's session you will hear how the UK is working with partners to ensure evidence of Russia's crimes is documented in a way that ensures prosecution. This includes providing funding and law enforcement support to reinforce the ICC's investigation, and the UK has appointed an experienced

and renowned ICC judge Sir Howard Morrison as an independent adviser to Ukrainian Prosecutor General.

When she visited in London, we were pleased to not only offer her technical support, and support for experts, but also financial commitments to ensure that the prosecutions start taking place.

What's most crucial to that is evidence and it is crucial that we put the survivors' rights at the heart of our evidence gathering.

Ensuring that survivors have their experiences recorded safely, in a way that strengthens the pursuit of justice, is an important step towards accountability. It is an important step towards healing.

Our collective approach should be guided by the principles laid out in the Murad Code, the global code of conduct for collection of information from survivors of systematic and conflict-related sexual violence.

I was proud and honoured to accompany the brave Nadia Murad, herself a survivor of sexual violence from the despicable organisation that is Daesh in Iraq. Who is now amongst the most powerful advocates of this particular issue, and indeed recognised through a Nobel prize.

And together with her, in April we launched the Murad Code at the UN Security Council. And we are deploying it. And we immediately ensured it was translated into Ukrainian to help those incredible, courageous survivors who are fleeing Russian onslaught, to ensure they are informed of their rights, and that we can secure their testimonies in a way that allows for successful prosecutions.

Let me also add that the UK will be hosting an international conference in November on this very issue. We must rally international support behind further action to tackle these heinous crimes.

Ukraine will, of course, be integral to our thinking and planning.

To conclude, Madam President, Mr Speaker, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I share your revulsion at the unrelenting horror Russia is inflicting upon the Ukrainian people. Russia itself is rich in history and tradition, and we must ensure also that the people of Russia – many brave Russian souls who have taken to the streets – also know that the fight is not with them but with the Government – Mr Putin's Government – who have inflicted this war, whose impacts are being felt across the world.

I also share the fact that through attacking ports such as Odesa, we are seeing Russia's attempt to weaponise global hunger.

And I'm sure I speak with everyone in this hall, in our support for Ukraine we will not waver. We will not yield to those who complain of war fatigue, who agitate for an unfair and unsustainable negotiated settlement.

We will continue to stand in solidarity with Ukraine and we will work with you in your efforts to push back Russia, to push back Mr Putin's intent,

through military support, through diplomatic isolation, sanctions and indeed acting at the heart of Russia's economy through its energy imports.

Ukraine's victory – god willing – will be not just a victory for Ukraine, it will be a victory for democracy. It will be a victory for the integrity and sovereignty of every nation. It is a victory in all our interests, and we will be with you, however long it takes.

There is much work ahead. Over the next four days you will be debating and reaching important decisions on how this institution – set up to look at issues of conflict and averting conflict, to look at issues of security across Europe, but ultimately to see how we can strengthen cooperation across Europe – will have deliberations on the important and challenging path it currently confronts

On this I can assure you that the UK has been, and will remain a steadfast partner in these efforts.

I wish you well in this vital task, and look forward to the outcome. Thank you.

ENDS

[UK Government provides vital finance for emergency services overhaul in Senegal](#)

Press release

£116.5 million loan backed by UK Export Finance will help UK businesses prevent avoidable disasters in the country.



- UK Export Finance (UKEF) and Standard Chartered Bank support will allow the Senegalese government to strengthen its fire response services and

medical equipment

- Support unlocks over £35 million worth of exports for UK companies who will supply equipment
- Deal announced during UKEF CEO Louis Taylor's visit to Senegal to boost trade and economic cooperation between the two countries

A historic agreement has been agreed between UKEF and the Senegalese government to strengthen the nation's fire response services, in a deal that will bolster UK exports to the region.

UKEF has supported a £116.5 million loan from Standard Chartered using a mix of Buyer Credit and Direct Lending which will be used to purchase fire-fighting and other life-saving emergency equipment in Senegal.

This is the first deal that UKEF has supported in Senegal and follows UKEF's largest-ever deal in [West Africa last year](#), worth over £200 million to support the construction of six hospitals in the Côte d'Ivoire.

Mike Freer, UK Minister for Exports, said:

The UK can provide a leading role when it comes to exporting fire safety equipment. This deal demonstrates how British ingenuity can better protect communities abroad and shows how the government can help UK businesses export their best-in-class equipment and services.

UKEF can help overseas buyers access financial support to make their projects happen, provided they commit to sourcing goods and services from the UK. This helps open new doors for world-class British suppliers to trade overseas.

The lifesaving equipment will make Senegal's fire and medical services better armed to respond to emergencies. As a result of the UKEF backing, over £34 million pounds worth of goods and materials for the project will come from UK suppliers. UK-made ambulances, fire trucks, footwear for first responders and medical equipment will be exported throughout Senegal.

Louis Taylor, CEO of UK Export Finance, said:

Senegal is a unique market for UK exporters to tap into. I've seen for myself this week how the UK and Senegal can work together to unlock projects in the country with our financing and open new trade routes for UK companies.

Published 2 July 2022

Virgin Orbit mission success brings UK launch another step closer

Virgin Orbit's next satellite launch will take place from the UK, following the success of the "Straight Up" mission, which lifted off from Mojave in California earlier today (2 July 2022).

Science Minister George Freeman and the UK Space Agency welcomed the news that Virgin Orbit has successfully completed its fourth mission from California, and its first night launch.

With this mission complete, Virgin Orbit is on track for launch from Spaceport Cornwall later this year. The UK Space Agency and Cornwall Council are supporting the launch, with Spaceport Cornwall set to create 150 jobs in the local area.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

Congratulations to Virgin Orbit on another successful US mission, which demonstrates the ability of its innovative launch platform to put satellites into orbit day or night. With the countdown on to the first satellite launch from UK soil, it's incredible to see Cosmic Girl and LauncherOne in action before they head to Spaceport Cornwall.

We are in a strong position to capitalise on the growing global demand for small satellite launch and to do so in a way that will keep space and our planet sustainable for future generations.

Matthew Archer, Director of Commercial Spaceflight at the UK Space Agency, who joined the Virgin Orbit team for the launch from the Mojave Air and Space Port, said:

The success of the Straight Up mission is another exciting milestone on our way to seeing the first satellite launch from UK soil. We are working closely with Virgin Orbit and it was a privilege to be alongside our partners to witness another successful launch for the team.

The UK is home to some of the world's leading satellite manufacturers, which currently ship their products overseas for launch. We are supporting them by fostering a new domestic launch market, with spaceports and launch operators providing services across the UK and catalysing investment from all over the world.

Today's Virgin Orbit mission launched seven satellites on behalf of the U.S.

Space Force that will experiment in space-based communications, in-space navigation and climate change.

A number of national and international satellites have also been confirmed for the first UK launch later this year, with customers including Space Forge, Satellite Applications Catapult and Horizon Technologies, the MOD, DSTL and US National Reconnaissance Office, and the Sultanate of Oman.

Unlike many rockets, Virgin Orbit's Launcher One takes off horizontally, carried aloft by a modified Boeing 747 aircraft, named Cosmic Girl.

This was Virgin Orbit's fourth commercial flight. In January 2021 the company put its first satellites into space, after launching from California's Mojave Air and Space Port.

Melissa Thorpe, Head of Spaceport Cornwall, said:

The success of this last launch in California is extremely rewarding for Spaceport Cornwall and the UK space sector. It was amazing to see both the team from Virgin Orbit and our team working together to mirror the US operations in real-time – ensuring we're mission-ready for the summer. This gave us a taste of what is to come and our team could not be more excited.

The UK Government's [National Space Strategy](#) sets out how the UK will become the first country in Europe to launch satellites into orbit in 2022. Spaceport Cornwall is one of seven potential spaceport sites across the UK which will help to cement the UK's role as a science superpower and help unleash a wave of innovation across the country.

The launch name, "Straight Up," is inspired by American singer Paula Abdul's song of that title, from her album Forever Your Girl.