

# **PE2112/L: Conduct an independent review of childcare costs and availability in Scotland**

## **Monica Lennon MSP written submission, 14 August 2025**

I welcome petition PE2112 submitted by the charity Pregnant then Screwed and offer some supportive comments.

An independent review of publicly funded early learning and childcare in Scotland is necessary to better understand and address the challenges families face when trying to secure and afford childcare.

The issues raised in the petition are familiar to me as an MSP for Central Scotland.

Across Scotland, countless mothers, fathers, and guardians are struggling to find affordable, accessible, and high-quality childcare. For new parents, the transition back to work is often fraught with anxiety, not due to a lack of will or capability, but because the system fails to support them. The cost of childcare is frequently prohibitive, and availability is patchy at best.

Healthy children begin with good care. The early years are critical for emotional, cognitive, and physical development. When parents are forced to choose between financial stability and adequate care for their children, we all lose. The consequences ripple outward: children miss out on formative experiences, parents, particularly women, are pushed out of the workforce, and communities suffer from the strain.

The impact on women is especially stark, as this petition demonstrates. Despite progress in gender equality, the burden of childcare continues to fall disproportionately on mothers. Many women are forced to reduce their hours, abandon career progression, or leave the workforce entirely, not because they lack ambition or talent, but because the system makes it nearly impossible to do otherwise. Being a mother should not be the kiss of death for a woman's career. Yet for too many, it is.

The petition's ask to commission an independent review of publicly-funded early learning and childcare in Scotland is reasonable. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure good and evidence-based policy making is prioritised in the childcare sector.

The expansion of funded childcare in Scotland is welcome but we risk wasting millions of pounds in public funding if we allocate resources into a system that many report is failing. Expanding the system without identifying where the cracks are, risks placing further strain on childcare providers whilst at the same time risking public money for little benefit.

The Scottish Women's Convention 'Childcare in Scotland Survey 2024' showed that 51.5% of women stated that organising childcare had negatively impacted their mental health. This clearly shows that existing childcare provision is not responding to the needs of parents, as is. Furthermore, it is well established that there is a postcode lottery in regard to childcare, with many families paying a premium due to lack of availability and a lack of any childcare whatsoever in some areas, particularly rural communities.

The Scottish Government's response to this petition is, in my opinion, inadequate. Ministers cannot be allowed to mark their own homework and call it evaluation. The response to this petition has not identified why there are problems with early learning and childcare in Scotland. It does not explain why childcare in many parts of Scotland is both unaffordable and inaccessible for parents.

Independent and honest evaluation is invaluable to the policy-making process. Ministers should jump on this opportunity to launch a serious inquiry into childcare in Scotland, before pledging millions of pounds. This will in the long run, enable better policy making decisions and benefit both parents and children.

An independent review is not a bureaucratic exercise, it is a moral and economic imperative. We need transparency, data, and above all, action. Scotland cannot afford to sideline its families or sacrifice the potential of its women. I urge the committee to support this petition and to prioritise the needs of families who are too often left behind.