

New school nurseries to help cut childcare costs in poorest areas

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Over 300 schools to open or expand nurseries, creating thousands of places, targeting areas childcare gaps and helping families save up to £8,000 a year.

In the latest drive by the government to bear down on the cost of living, thousands more parents will save on childcare costs as the government expands childcare to over 300 more schools from September.

School-based nurseries are already providing a lifeline for families. Combined with the government's 30 hours of funded childcare, they are cutting childcare costs in half for working families, making the school run simpler with fewer drop offs during busy mornings, and helping parents return to work.

A further 331 schools across the country have been successful in applying for a share of £45 million funding to build or expand nurseries on their site. The new nurseries will add to the vibrant childcare market and create over 6,000 more childcare places for children from St Ives to Gateshead, on top of the up to 6,000 already being delivered from the first phase of the programme.

New figures published today show over a million parents now use the government's funded childcare offer. But the data also reveals lower take-up in poorer communities, highlighting the need to target new places where families face the biggest barriers to accessing childcare.

School-based nurseries already play a major role in filling those gaps, making up around 35% of childcare provision in the most deprived areas, compared with 16% in the least deprived.

Now, the government is going further. From May, the programme will move to a locally led model, with councils, rather than schools, invited to propose plans for new places in communities with the greatest need.

For the first time, Best Start Family Hubs, soon to be opening in every local area, will also be able to host school-based nurseries. This will bring childcare together with family support, health visiting and early identification of special educational needs and disabilities under one roof – meaning more joined up support, for more families.

It comes as ten local areas will soon benefit from an additional Early Years Pupil Premium funding boost of £363 per child – on top of the unprecedented 45% uplift in 2025 and further 15% this year – for early years providers to improve the quality of education, raise attainment, and support development of children from more deprived backgrounds.

Alongside new nursery places, the government's cost-of-living measures mean that families are also saving up to £450 a year due to free breakfast clubs, with further support from a cap on branded school uniform costs and expansion of free school meals to those on Universal Credit.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said:

As a parent, I know how hard it can be to juggle work and family life, especially in those

early days where time is precious and sleep is short.

School-based nurseries are already driving a seismic shift in how childcare supports families. Now we're going even further to build on what works with over 300 new nurseries - cutting childcare costs, simplifying the school run, and helping parents at a time when household budgets are under real pressure.

This is about targeting support where it's needed most, easing the cost of living and giving every child the best start in life.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said:

Our school-based nurseries are already helping fill the gaps in communities where childcare is hardest to find, giving children the strong start they deserve and helping parents access childcare close to home.

By expanding these nurseries further and targeting them at the areas that need them most, we are making sure more families can benefit from quality early education while putting practical support in place to help with the cost of living.

For too long, where a child grows up has shaped what they go on to achieve. This government was elected to change that - starting with giving every child the best start in life and making sure every family can access the childcare they need, wherever they live.

Sitting alongside the brilliant childcare offered by childminders and private, voluntary and independent settings, new polling shows parents strongly value the convenience of school-based nurseries.

More than a third (37%) say being able to drop multiple children at the same location is a key benefit, and nearly six in ten (59%) say they help prepare for the school transition.

Children growing up in the most deprived communities are more than 20 percentage points less likely to reach a good level of development by age five.

By targeting the next phase of the programme in areas where need is the highest, the government is determined to improve children's development and school readiness across the board and give every child the best start in life.

Headteacher at Hillsborough Primary in Sheffield, Nicola Wileman, said:

We are absolutely thrilled to have been chosen for this grant - it's such a great thing for our school and our whole community.

Our area has faced real challenges over recent years, with higher levels of deprivation and a drop in nursery provision since Covid, meaning too many children were starting school without having accessed early childcare.

This expansion will help us ensure every local family has access to a quality, trusted nursery, giving children the best possible start in life and helping parents get back into

work and back into the community.

From September, providers in Brighton and Hove, Durham, Islington, Leeds, Luton, Nottingham, Rochdale, Rotherham, Torbay and Sandwell will all be able to access the additional EYPP funding, through the new test and learn programme designed to make sure the government's unprecedented uplifts are delivering for children and families on the ground.

The programme, running in another ten local areas to be announced next year, will assess the different ways providers are making the most of the increased funding through staff training, resources or activities and experiences to improve awareness, take-up and effective use of the funding.

This rollout forms part of the government's wider programme to support families with the cost of living.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-school-nurseries-to-help-cut-childcare-costs-in-poorest-areas>