Letter template for opposition party MPs (Labour, Lib Dem, Independent)

Dear [you can find the name and contact details of your local MP [here](http://www.writetothem.com/)]

I am [job title] of [name of setting] in [area/town/village] in your constituency. We provide high quality early education and childcare which gives children an excellent start in life while also supporting working families.

The Government has made a commitment of delivering its 30-hours free entitlement as what it sees as its landmark commitment to the early years sector. However, research has shown that this policy is not delivering for early years educators or, most importantly, for children and their families who rely on us.

I am a member of the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and they have recently found that 95% of nurseries and childcare settings like mine say that the funding rates from the Government do not cover our costs in delivering childcare places for three and four-year-olds. An average shortfall of £1.87 per hour adds up to over £2,132 over the course of a year for a 30-hour place.

A consequence of the current challenges faced by childcare settings like mine is that 85% of us now expect to operate at a loss or just break-even. This cannot be sustainable and will see even more nurseries at risk of closing, especially in areas of deprivation where Government funding accounts for 72% of the hours taken up by children.

I am also worried about the impact this has on the availability of places for parents and families. A survey of 1,300 parents carried out by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Childcare and Early Education earlier this year found that nine out of ten parents believe the early years sector is not sufficiently funded. In addition, the Early Years Alliance has empirical data showing that there is a shortfall of £2.60 per child, per hour, for every 30-hours place.

As an early years educator, I am deeply concerned about reports that the Government may consider a change in the staff to child ratios as a way to cut the cost of childcare. Children’s early years are an absolutely crucial stage of their development that shape their lifelong education journey and their life chances. Cutting down on staff to child ratios is not the answer to reducing the cost of childcare at a time of staffing crisis and underinvestment from the Government. We can’t fix the challenges faced by the early years sector just by asking staff and nurseries to do more with less.

However, there are solutions available. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Childcare and Early Education recently [wrote to the Treasury and the Department for Education](https://connectpa.co.uk/early-years-catch-up-premium-needed/) to offer some to address these issues as part of the forthcoming Spending Round, including:

* An early years catch-up premium of £3,000 per child, per year to ensure every 30 hours place is fully funded to a sustainable level.
* A meaningful review of the early years funding review to cover:
  + A multi-year funding settlement to allow providers certainty and planning over the coming years.
  + Developing a mechanism for funding allocation to address rising costs, especially ensuring providers can pay early years professionals the National Living Wage.
  + Simplifying the funding system to ensure that Government funding follows child and that parental understanding around the entitlement is improved, especially for two-year olds and tax-free childcare.
  + Ensures effective use of public money and maximum investment in children’s early education and care by minimising barriers like VAT and business rates on providers delivering publicly funded places.
  + All allocations of early years funding are undertaken considering of the needs of children with SEND across all settings.
  + Setting out a clear vision for the early years and childcare workforce and a restatement of the crucial importance of achieving a well-qualified, high status and better rewarded professionals.

Please raise my concerns about any changes to staffing ratios with the Secretary of State for Education and make the case for better investment in our children’s futures with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Government has set out ambitions to ‘level-up’ across the country as well as investing in a ‘Plan For Jobs’. However, they are currently failing to deliver that. We need to invest in building children’s futures through early education and ensuring access to childcare places for working families if we are to make real progress.

Thank you in advance for your support for our hard-working early years professionals.

Yours sincerely,

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