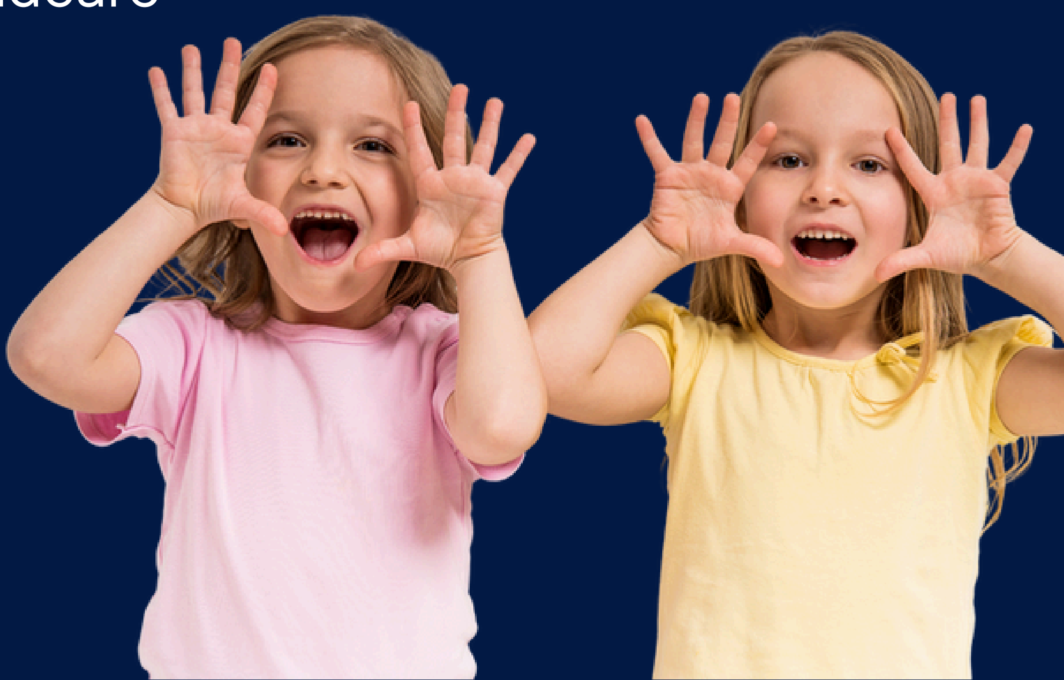
SACA
SCHOOL AGED CHILDCARE ASSOCIATION

Junior Adventures Group

Every Child Every Opportunity

Stabilising the future of wraparound childcare beyond 2026



How we can stabilise the future of wraparound childcare and support parents?

Wraparound Childcare refers to before school, after school and holiday time for children aged 3+years when the leave primary school. The Government has invested 289 million through the National Wraparound Childcare Programme creating availability for families to access wraparound care before and after school. However, without a coordinated approach to ensure affordability there is a risk that this investment will not sustain.

73%

of parents say cost affects their decision to use wraparound care.

38%

have reduced working hours due to affordability issues.

86%

say affordable wraparound care is important to their family.

82%

say childcare policies influence how they vote.

Our recommendations

Undertake a National Review

Assess the impact of a subsidised model of after-school and holiday care, alongside breakfast clubs, on working parents and provision across the UK. The review should examine existing gaps, consider the case for a universal, income-linked model, and set out a clear timeline of milestones for reform.

Establish a cross-departmental taskforce to design a cohesive, innovate childcare strategy

Bring together the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, providers, experts, and academics to design a cohesive strategy. Meeting quarterly, this group should oversee implementation, share sector insights, and ensure reform is both practical and ambitious.

2026

Launch a new wraparound care programme by the end of 2026

Introduce a subsidised model of childcare covering before and after-school care and holiday provision, piloted across groups of schools. Parents will be able to increase their working hours, knowing their children will be supported in safe, enriching and professional childcare settings, giving them the best start in life.

The question is no longer whether reform is needed but whether we can act quickly enough to deliver it. The 2026 funding cliff edge makes delays impossible. With the right decisions now, the UK can create a wraparound childcare system that is fair, sustainable, and future proof that delivers for children, empowers families, strengthens schools, and grows the economy, whilst giving children the best start in life.

Executive Summary

This white paper is presented by SACA

The School-Aged Childcare Association) with support from Junior Adventures Group (JAG) UK, setting out the case for transforming the UK's current school-aged childcare system. Wraparound childcare is vital in supporting all working parents, and the development of school-aged children, at a crucial time in their lives.

SACA is the national voice for medium to large school-aged childcare providers, representing those delivering breakfast, after-school, and holiday clubs in communities across the country. Its founding members are already working across 114 local authorities, delivering more than 300 breakfast clubs, 400+ Ofsted-registered wraparound clubs, and over 600 holiday activity camps. Junior Adventures Group UK (JAG) is the UK's leading provider of before, during, after-school, and holiday clubs.

Wraparound childcare refers to the before-school, after-school, and holiday-time provision for children aged 3+ years up to when they leave primary school. This wraparound care provides every child with the best start in life; it allows children to learn, play, and thrive outside the traditional classroom hours, while giving parents the security and flexibility to stay in work.

It is a crucial pillar in the wider enrichment and development of children, improving their social skills, whilst in a safe, secure and encouraging environment. It is a core part of everyday life for millions of families across the UK.

Current Landscape – Why Now?

Increasing costs of childcare and limited availability of provisions currently result in families having to reduce working hours or leaving the workforce completely. The sector itself also cannot thrive in these conditions, as providers deal with increasing operating costs and uncertainty around wider funding, with the end of the Wraparound Childcare Programme in 2026.

Wraparound childcare is now in urgent need of comprehensive reform, and a commitment from the Government to pursue ensuring the sustainability of the sector. Without decisive action from Government, families will continue to face rising costs and limited options, providers will be forced to scale back or close, and the UK will miss a crucial opportunity to strengthen its economy through greater workforce participation.

Without urgent reform and coordination, the system will also continue to fail children and families. A bold, integrated approach is essential — one that safeguards children's wellbeing and access to play, while also unlocking parents' ability to work and advance in their careers. This is particularly critical for women and single carers, whose economic participation and stability are most at risk if we do not act now.

Internationally, there has been great success supporting parents and children through a subsidised model. Household income is linked to subsided hours of childcare, with lower-income families offered more subsidised hours.

Through polling data from parents, insights from our sector as key industry stakeholders, and wider international comparisons, the paper explores the current challenges facing families, and the growing economic case for investing and addressing the future of wraparound childcare in the UK.

What Parents are Telling Us

National polling across more than 1,500 [1] families carried out by 89 Degrees [2] found:

Parents want flexible, affordable, and reliable services that support their work and their children's wellbeing. But the UK's current fragmented system cannot deliver that at scale.

While the Wraparound Childcare Fund expanded access to childcare in disadvantaged areas, it was never designed as a long-term solution and will expire in 2026. Without replacement, the UK risks limited availability of provisions, rising costs for parents, and instability for providers.

This sits alongside another gap: whilst the Government rolls out 30 hours of free childcare for under-fives, there is no equivalent entitlement for school-aged children. Parents require before, after school and holiday care, yet the current systems to support families to afford these services are inconsistent without any co-ordinated funding model in place.

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[1] 89 Degrees Polling
[2] Junior Adventures Group/SACA UK Report, July 2025, 89 Degrees

Recommendations

Our recommendations provide a roadmap for government...

We welcomed the Government's commitment to free universal breakfast clubs and continue to work on ensuring the early adopter phase clearly outlines the benefits, the challenges, and the recommendations moving forward. We also welcome the Government's recent extension of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, however we are calling for Government to think of the long-term future for the whole sector.

We have 3 key calls to Government to ensure the sustainable and affordable future of the wraparound childcare sector:

Our 3 Key Calls

Undertake a national review that provides support throughout the year.

Establish a cross-departmental taskforce to design a cohesive, innovate childcare strategy.

Launch a new wraparound care programme by the end of 2026 to provide long-term security and sustainability for the sector.

What is Wraparound Childcare / School Aged Childcare?

Wraparound care, sometimes called school-aged childcare, is the provision of structured, safe, and enriching activities for children before and after the school day, and during school holidays. It bridges the gap between school hours and parents' working hours, offering families flexibility and children the opportunity to thrive beyond the classroom.

Wraparound care is much more than supervision. It provides high-quality environments where children can continue to learn, socialise, and build confidence. It supports schools to strengthen their role within the community. Furthermore, it enables parents to work, train, and progress in their careers knowing their children are safe and supported.

The Benefits of Wraparound Care

For Children

Safe, stimulating environments that nurture skills, creativity, friendships and wellbeing. Creating a that community promotes play, resilience and joy.

For Parents

Reliable, flexible care that makes it possible to work, study, train, and balance family life.

For Schools

Stronger connections with families, improved attendance, additional resources, and a more resilient community role.

For The Economy

Greater workforce participation, particularly among women; reduced absenteeism; higher productivity; and long-term returns through stronger child outcomes.

Wraparound childcare delivers a unique double dividend: investment in children's development and wellbeing, and investment in parental employment and economic growth. It is a vital part of modern life that touches multiple priorities across society — and has the potential to deliver a lasting, positive legacy for children, families, and communities.

School-Aged Childcare in the UK

The UK is home to some of the most expensive childcare in the developed world (OECD) [3]. For school-aged children, provision is fragmented: a mix of school clubs, voluntary groups, charities, and private providers delivering before- and after-school clubs as well as holiday schemes.

Many schools already face significant pressures, from funding and staffing challenges to safeguarding, attendance, and levelling-up responsibilities. In this context, investing in school-aged childcare can play a transformative role. It can;

- Reduce Costs for Parents.
- Create Stronger career pathways and employment opportunities for childcare staff.
- Support children's learning, development, and wellbeing.
- Strengthen schools as community hubs and deepen family engagement.
- Provide safe, regulated and standardised provision.

[3] https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/net-childcare-costs.html

A Sector Under Pressure - OOSA

The data paints a picture of a resilient but stretched sector. Over half of providers report staff retention rates of 90% or higher, with one in five maintaining teams where the longest-serving member has been in post for more than two decades. This speaks to dedicated professionals committed to school-aged childcare. However, significant vacancies persist across the sector, with 40% of providers reporting multiple vacant roles. The contradiction is stark: experienced, committed staff working alongside persistent gaps that providers struggle to fill.

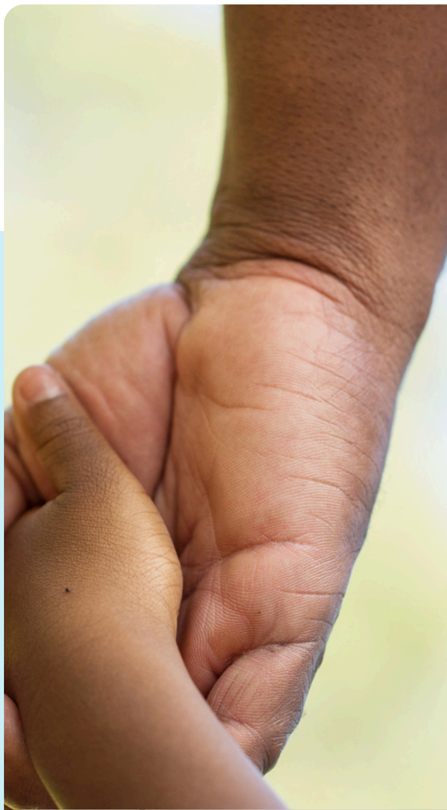
Confidence in financial sustainability is worryingly low. Only 32% of providers feel very confident about their financial position over the next 12 months, while 18% are not confident at all. This uncertainty is compounded by the reality that many settings operate with significant vacancies and limited capacity to invest in workforce development.

Looking ahead, over half of providers (53%) anticipate remaining the same size over the coming year with 4% reporting a likely closure. These figures reflect a sector in limbo - unable to confidently plan for expansion and facing very real sustainability risks.

Out of School Alliance
supporting providers - shaping futures

Current Childcare Options for Families

Parents typically access wraparound childcare through a patchwork of routes. Unlike early years, there is no universal state-funded system for 4–11-year-olds. Most provision is parent-paid, with some limited support via tax and benefits:



Tax-Free Childcare

Up to 20% of childcare costs back, capped at £2,000 per child per year.

Universal Credit Childcare Element

Up to 85% of costs covered for eligible low-income families.

Childcare Vouchers

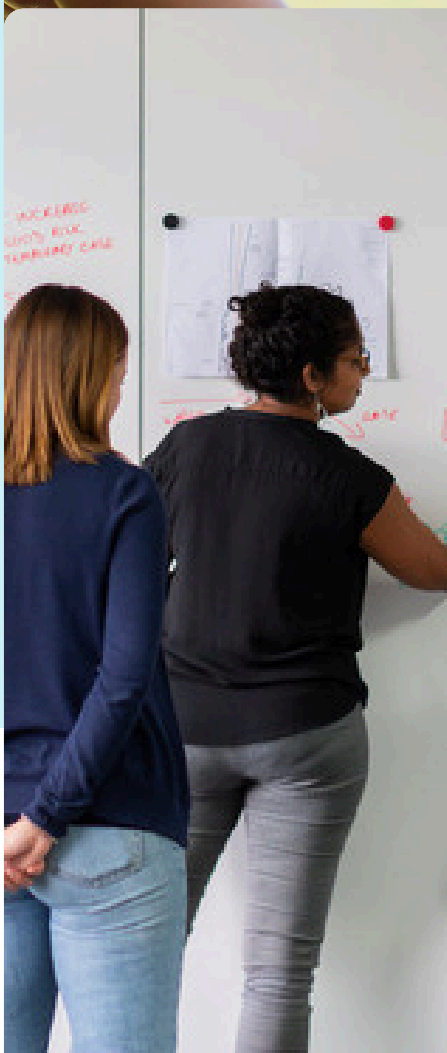
Closed to new applicants since 2018, but still in use by some families.

Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme

Free childcare and meals for children on free school meals, but only during Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays.

Early Adopter Breakfast Clubs

A pilot of up to 750 schools offering a universal 30-minute breakfast club for every child



National Wraparound Childcare Programme

Designed to expand access to before- and after-school childcare places in England.

These initiatives provide valuable support, but they remain uncoordinated and time-limited, with quality of access often unevenly dictated by postcode. The system relies heavily on direct parent payments and does not yet provide the universal, affordable, and sustainable framework that families, schools, and providers need.

Wraparound Childcare

The Problem

The UK's current approach to wraparound childcare is fragmented. Rather than operating as a cohesive, national system, provision varies dramatically depending on where families live and which funding sources are accessible. Fragmentation across funding mechanisms, delivery models, and local authorities has created a inconsistencies that unfairly benefits some families while leaving others without viable options - specifically relating to SEND children. For providers, this lack of consistency breeds uncertainty and undermines sustainability. For families, it creates confusion, inequity, and affordability challenges.

The 2026 Cliff Edge

The National Wraparound Childcare Programme, announced to help expand access to before and after school childcare, has been a valuable step forward. However, it is time-limited and due to expire in 2026. Without a long-term replacement in place, thousands of placements and associated funds risk being lost, leading to a potential funding cliff edge.

This looming deadline leaves providers unable to plan sustainably, schools hesitant to commit, and parents anxious about future affordability and access. The result is uncertainty across the system: parents may not take up childcare if they fear it will become unaffordable; providers may hold back on investment; and schools may deprioritise expansion.

At the same time, parents face another cliff edge when children start school. School is not childcare: working families need support before school, after school, and in the holidays. This Government has expanded 30 hours free childcare for children under five which is important for those younger children however no equivalent entitlement exists for school-aged children. The gap leaves parents struggling with high costs and patchy access at precisely the stage when consistent childcare remains essential for work.

Without clarity, the National Wraparound Childcare Programme risks becoming a short-term patch rather than the foundation of a sustainable national system. Ultimately, funding to expand access must go hand in hand with a commitment to affordability; without both, the system cannot be truly sustainable.

Challenges for Children with SEND

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face significant and growing challenges within the current system. The number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has increased by 71% since 2018, with nearly 5% of all pupils now receiving this statutory support[4]. As a result, many local authorities are managing intense financial pressures, with cumulative high-needs budget deficits reaching £3.3 billion in 2024[5]. A temporary measure allows these deficits to be excluded from council accounts, but it expires in March 2026, leaving councils facing further uncertainty.[6]

The Public Accounts Committee has described the current SEND system as "inconsistent, inequitable and not delivering in line with expectations"[7]. Nearly all tribunals appeal against EHCP decisions, 98%, are upheld, highlighting widespread inconsistencies in access and delivery[8].

As the number of children requiring specialist support continues to grow, there is a clear need for a more sustainable, inclusive, and consistent approach. This will require joined-up reforms across funding, capacity, and delivery, ensuring that children with SEND can access high-quality wraparound provision, regardless of where they live.

[4][5][7] Ibid.
[6] https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46238/documents/231788/default/
[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023#annual-special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-statistics

Inconsistencies in Provision

One underlying driver of the fragmented nature of school-aged childcare is the absence of a coherent national regulatory framework. Unlike early years provision, where statutory requirements for staff qualifications, ratios, and curriculum are clearly established, wraparound care for school-aged children operates in a regulatory grey area, with schools and providers working with varying regulations, alongside the ambiguous guidance on staff ratio's, qualifications specific to before, after school and holiday provision. This not only creates inconsistencies in provision but also undermines the ability of providers to plan sustainably, recruit confidently, and ensure quality. For families, it results in confusion and a lack of transparency when choosing care options.

Addressing this regulatory gap is important to ensure all children have access to safe, enriching, and developmentally appropriate environments, regardless of where they live or which provider they access.

Access to wraparound care is largely determined by local leadership decisions. This means the availability, quality, and cost of provision differ substantially across regions. In some areas, families benefit from affordable, programmes; in others, they face long waiting lists or a total absence of services. Meanwhile, children with special educational needs and disabilities continue to face significant gaps in care, compounding barriers to inclusion and equality.

A family's postcode should not determine whether their child can access safe, enriching care or whether a parent can return to work.

Fragmented & Temporary Funding

At the core of this issue lies a fragmented and short-term approach to funding. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme has been life-changing for many vulnerable children and young people, supporting 628,000 children last summer (2024)[9] by providing enrichment, nutrition, and a safe space during school holidays. However, its impact is constrained; it is only available to children eligible for free school meals and operates during limited periods of the year such as Easter, Summer and Winter Holidays. The Wraparound Childcare Fund, while valuable in expanding access, is due to expire in 2026 with no permanent replacement.

Beyond these are a collection of national subsidies and tax reliefs, such as Tax-Free Childcare, that are under-utilised and poorly understood. According to polling, 54% of parents are unaware of subsidies available to them[10] and only 1 in 3 report that are using tax free childcare, suggesting that, even where support exists, it is not accessible in practice[11].

The Government's rollout of free universal breakfast clubs for all primary schools is a positive and welcome step. However, it does not address the full breadth of wraparound needs. Breakfast provision, while helpful, does not cover after-school hours, when most working parents require support, or school holidays, when demand peaks. Nor does it support the full spectrum of child development and socialisation that quality wraparound care provides.
As such, these initiatives, remain isolated measures within an uncoordinated system and the UK continues to be left behind compared to other developed nations such as Australia and Ireland.

The result is a landscape where parents must navigate a complex array of schemes, often without clear guidance or eligibility information. Unsurprisingly, research[12] found that 73% of parents would be likely to use wraparound care if it were more affordable, underlining the demand for a more coherent and inclusive approach.

[9] https://www.mottmac.com/en-us/projects/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/
[10][11][12] 89 Degrees Polling

Strain on Providers & Families

In this fractured environment, providers and schools are increasingly under pressure. Many face financial instability due to short-term grants, unpredictable demand, and acute staffing shortages. Meanwhile, parents are forced to make difficult compromises.

Polling reveals[13] that:

28%

of parents have reduced their working hours to manage school pick-up responsibilities

20%

rely on family members for childcare

These gaps in formal provision are leading to a rise in unsupervised or screen-based time.

65%

of children use digital devices after school

85%

of parents express concern about the impact of screen time on their child's wellbeing

In many cases, wraparound care is not just a convenience, it is a lifeline.

The Long Term Risk

Without decisive reform, the pressures facing this sector will only intensify. Parents, especially mothers and single carers, will continue to exit the workforce or scale back their hours, undermining family incomes and economic growth. Providers may be forced to reduce their hours or shut down altogether. And most importantly, thousands of children risk losing access to safe, structured environments that support their learning, development, and wellbeing.

That's why reform is central to helping the government achieve its core economic mission of delivering growth. High-quality, accessible wraparound care gives parents the flexibility to re-enter the workforce or increase their hours.

[13] 89 Degrees Polling

This isn't just good for families; it's good for the economy

By removing barriers to employment and supporting working families, we would unlock productivity, raise household incomes, and lay the foundation for long-term, inclusive growth.

This is no longer simply a childcare issue. It is a broader question of how we support families, drive inclusive economic participation, and ensure every child, regardless of background, can thrive. Without urgent and coordinated intervention, the UK will continue to entrench a two-tier system: one where access depends on income, location, and luck, rather than need and opportunity.

What are parents saying?

In May 2025, Junior Adventures Group UK[14] commissioned research[15] that revealed the crucial role of wraparound childcare to working parents, and the significance of government policy in providing families with needed support.

Findings outline the struggle of working families to balance career choices with childcare decisions, ensuring that every child has the best start in life. A lack of available and easily accessible childcare often leads to parents reducing working hours or leaving the workforce altogether, with 1 in 2 parents stating[16] that the cost of wraparound care has impacted their ability to work, and 10% leaving the workforce altogether.

'As a mum and working-class parent, wraparound care offers essential support by providing safe, reliable before- and after-school [care] so I can work without constant worry.'

Mother - 25-34 years

Notably, single parent families and low-income households are the hardest hit by this burden, resulting in a cycle where poor access to childcare perpetuates a lack of opportunity and social mobility. Sufficient childcare also enables women to manage and navigate work commitments, supporting equal career progression by preventing the responsibility of childcare falling to women, as so often occurs.

[14]Junior Adventures Group UK is the UK's leading provider of before, during and after-school activity clubs and holiday clubs
[15][16] 89 Degrees Polling

Barriers to Childcare

'We can't afford other childcare expenses or wraparound care etc. I can't work full time because of our child and working part-time just wouldn't be worth it in the end financially, so I'm a stay-at-home parent.'

Mother - 25-34 years

In terms of the barriers to wraparound childcare, our polling revealed that affordability is the key driver. 73% of parents[17] said cost is an important factor which influences their decision to use childcare services, while 35% of those who do not use wraparound care cited cost as the main prevention. Many agreed with calls for universal subsidies that would reduce such pressures.

Despite recognising the importance of childcare, many respondents were unaware of the childcare subsidies available to them.

Political Power

What is clear, however, is that parents believe in the government's ability to rectify this situation and provide for families across the UK. 79% of respondents[18] said they would welcome action from the Government to expand wraparound care.

This plays out in the polling stations too, with parties' childcare commitments shaping voters' behaviour. Over three-quarters of respondents said that childcare policies influence how they vote, revealing that there is an appetite for the government to make clear that voters understand how childcare delivery will improve their day-to-day lives, and that this must be a priority for the large demographic of working families.

Enriching Children's Lives

Beyond the necessity of childcare and how it plays an integral role in allowing parents to work, our research has also shown the enrichment it offers to children in ensuring that there are equal beginnings for all. Wraparound childcare can offer safe, structured environments that nurture children through both education and recreation.

In the growing digital age, parents expressed concerns about their children's use of mobile phones when left alone, with 67% stating[19] their child spent more than two hours a day on devices during the school holidays. Breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs all offer a safe alternative, with childcare a direct investment in children's wellbeing.

"With both of us working, knowing that our child is in a safe, structured environment before and after school gives us peace of mind. It helps us manage our time better and reduces stress at home."

Father - 24-34 years

[17][18][19] 89 Degrees Polling

Childcare Case Study

Paxton Primary School

Paxton Primary School in South-East London has partnered with Junior Adventures Group (JAG) for over 10 years to provide wraparound care through its Rise then Shine breakfast club and Stay and Play after-school club. Alongside nutritious meals, children take part in JAG's Adventure Programme—including Creative Inventors, Wellbeing Warriors and Super Sports—which encourages creativity, wellbeing and active play. The clubs focus on giving pupils "the best start to the day" and building friendships, with children gaining confidence, communication skills and the chance to learn across year groups.

Key Outcomes

"With close collaboration between JAG and the school, including SEND support and consistent behaviour strategies, the partnership has created a safe, inclusive environment where children are enriched and supported beyond the classroom."

Mrs Mayer. Extended Services Manager (420 pupil, 176 children wraparound)

What Needs to Happen

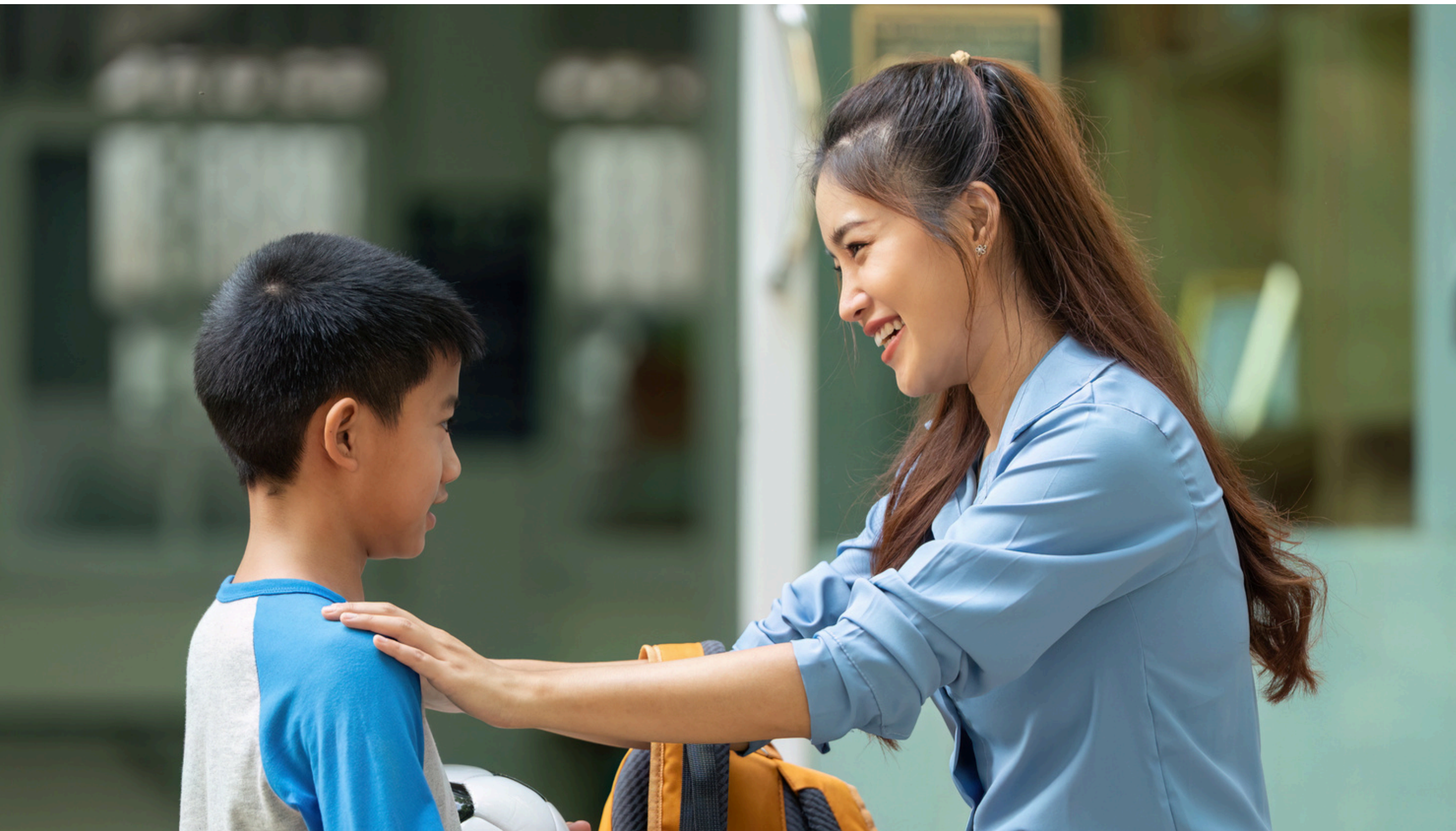
While providers are supportive of the government's ambition of free universal breakfast clubs being made available to all primary school children in England, this is a small element of what families require for School Aged Childcare across the year.

To help the government achieve its mission to set every child up for the best start in life and meet their economic growth ambitions, we believe the UK has an opportunity to build on this offering with a wider review and reform of the UK childcare system itself; 30 minutes of childcare a day is a good start, but it is not enough for working parents.

Doing this now is vital, we have an opportunity - we ask that the government commit to an assessment of the sector, in order to produce a review and strategy by the end of 2026, which provides a clear solution to the pressing gap in childcare that parents are about to face. This strategy should be advised and implemented by the support of a cross-industry working taskforce that can offer clear insights into the practical elements of childcare and what parents need.

Creating a wider subsidised model for wraparound care is the ultimate solution to this cliff-edge moment and will build on the foundations for a better start in life for children as set by the government. It will help make sure everyone across the country has access to quality childcare through this funding, rather than through a fragmented system. Having all this care centralised by government, and supported through subsidies, will ensure the type of childcare that is received is of high standard.

It is clear parents will support such as system and have already on a global scale - further case studies of long term childcare models can be explored on pages 16-17.



Our Recommendations

The future of wraparound childcare in the UK stands at a critical juncture. Without urgent and coordinated reform, families will continue to face rising costs, reduced availability, and the impossible choice between work and caring for their children. Providers will face unsustainable pressures, schools will lose opportunities to strengthen their role in communities, and the wider economy will forfeit one of its most effective drivers of growth.

International evidence shows a different path is possible. Countries from Ireland to Australia to the Netherlands have demonstrated that well-designed, subsidised childcare models — tailored to household income - can deliver affordable, high-quality provision, boost parental employment, and generate long-term returns for the economy.

The UK now has the opportunity to act decisively: to create a sustainable, accessible, and affordable system that supports children's wellbeing, empowers parents (particularly women and single carers) to work and progress in their careers, and secures the long-term future of the sector.

Our recommendations to government set out a clear and achievable roadmap for reform. To secure the future of wraparound childcare, we call on government to:

Undertake a National Review

Assess the impact of a subsidised model of after-school and holiday care, alongside breakfast clubs, on working parents and provision across the UK. The review should examine existing gaps, consider the case for a universal, income-linked model, and set out a clear timeline of milestones for reform.

Establish a cross-departmental taskforce to design a cohesive, innovate childcare strategy.

Bring together the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, providers, experts, and academics to design a cohesive strategy. Meeting quarterly, this group should oversee implementation, share sector insights, and ensure reform is both practical and ambitious.

2026

Launch a new wraparound care programme by the end of 2026

Introduce a subsidised model of childcare covering before and after-school care and holiday provision, piloted across groups of schools. Parents will be able to increase their working hours, knowing their children will be supported in safe, enriching and professional childcare settings, giving them the best start in life.

The question is no longer whether reform is needed but whether we can act quickly enough to deliver it. The 2026 funding cliff edge makes delays impossible. With the right decisions now, the UK can create a wraparound childcare system that is fair, sustainable, and future proof that delivers for children, empowers families, strengthens schools, and grows the economy, whilst giving children the best start in life.

A Global Case for Reform

On an international scale, we see the impact that long-term childcare models, which are partly subsidised based on income, can have in stimulating economic growth and supporting families and children. Below are several examples which illustrate the positive impact these models are having in Australia, Holland and Ireland.

Australia: Universally Applied But Partly Subsidised

In Australia, through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), care for children aged 13 and under is subsidised, based on family income estimations.From 2025-2026, if a family's income is below AU$85,279, 90% of childcare costs are subsidised, with the percentage decreasing by 1% for every extra AU$5,000 of family income[20].

This scheme has been in place since 2018 and has been highlighted after continued demand from parents to increase the availability and affordability of wraparound care. There have also been tangible results for those in the workforce.

Of parents surveyed in Australia, 44% said the CCS has enabled them to manage work or study, with 37% stating they would have to reduce their work hours without it. It has also been successful in delivering quality care for children. One parent surveyed said subsidised care in Australia 'helps keep my children on a good schedule and gives them more opportunities to socialise and participate in physical activities.'

The Netherlands: Working with parents, for children

In the Netherlands, wraparound care is subsided under the kinderopvangtoeslag childcare benefit system.[21] Eligible families are where both parents or the sole parent of single parent household are in work, self-employed, education or training. They can claim up to 230 hour per child per month across all types of formal childcare, up to the age a child completes primary school. The benefit reimburses a percentage of these eligible costs, ranging from 33.3% for higher-income families (for a first child) up to 96% for lower-income households, with more generous rates applying for additional children. Any amount charged above the government's hourly cap is paid entirely by parents.

[20] https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/providers/child-care-subsidy
[21]https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/nl/kinderopvangtoeslag/kinderopvangtoeslag

The Republic of Ireland: Economic Growth Realised for Parents

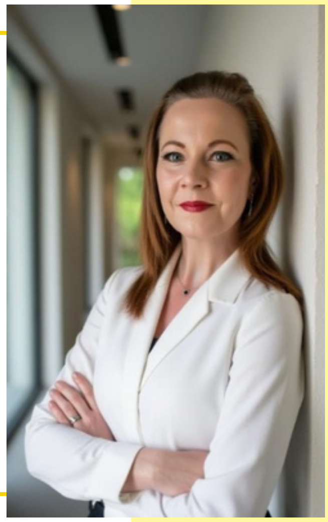
In Ireland, under the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), any citizen is entitled to childcare for children aged between six months and 15 years. Under this subsidised model, if a parent is working, they are entitled to 45 hours of subsidised childcare per week, and if they are not working, they can qualify for 20 hours of childcare per week[22]. Funds are raised through general taxation, and subsidies are directly paid to registered childcare providers.

As of May 2025, approximately 190,000 children were benefitting from the scheme, increasing by 17% within seven months[23]. Introduced originally in 2019, a review carried out by the Irish Government in 2021 saw 28% of parents say they were working more, with 8% stating they would not be working at all without the NCS[24].

A 2024 report found that for every €1 invested in early learning and childcare, there is an €8 return in economic impact from parents' work, which is transpiring as we see Ireland's economic growth outpacing the United Kingdom[25]. As of 2024, Ireland's GDP per Capita sits at 107,316 (US$), whilst in the United Kingdom, it sits at 52,635 (US$) [26].

'Since 2019, when the NCS was introduced, the Irish Government have been proactively working with private providers, such as Sherpa Kids, to ensure that the childcare in place as part of the NCS is of high quality. They have been receptive to our feedback and continue to encourage the uptake of children into these provisions. Of Irish parents surveyed, 91% believe school aged childcare helps provide safe, active, social environments that supports children's wellbeing. The Irish public support the model, and recognise through part subsidisation, they can increase working hours, save money in the long term and trust their children are in a safe and nourishing environment.'

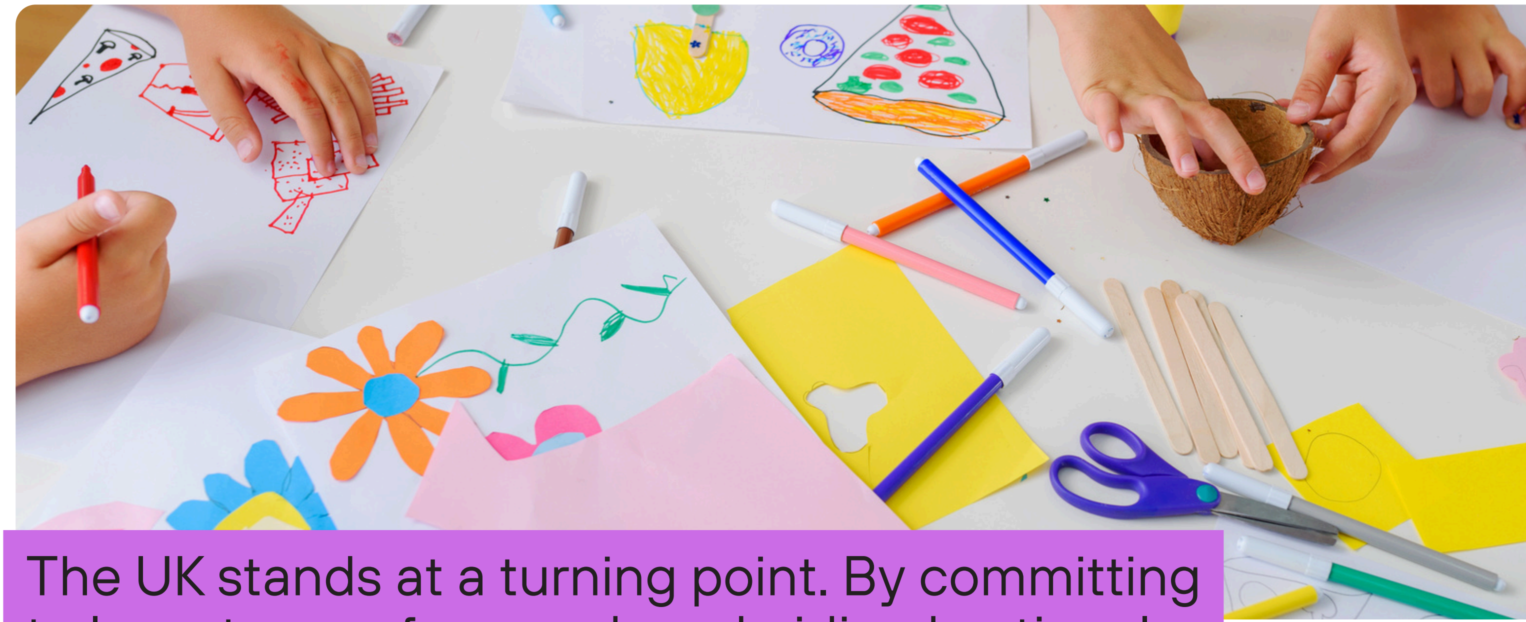
Jennifer Lee, Managing Director, Sherpa Kids Ireland



Country	Policy / Scheme	Participation & Uptake	Impact on Parents	Economic Impact
Ireland	National Childcare Scheme (2019)	190,000 Children Enrolled by May 2025 (17% rise in 7 months)	28% of parents worked more; 8% would not work at all without it	€8 return for every €1 invested; GDP per capita €107,316 vs UK €52,635
Australia	Child Care Subsidy (2018)	Universally applied; subsidy % linked to family income	44% said CCS enabled them to manage work / study; 37% would reduce hours without it	PwC modelling: +29,000 FTE workers by 2050; +A$7.6bn GDP; A$4.3bn net fiscal saving

[22] https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/
[23] https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/press-releases/17-increase-in-number-of-children-availing-of-government-funded-childcare-subsidies/
[24] https://www.gov.ie/ga/an-roinn-leana%c3%ad-m%c3%adchumais-agus-comhionannais/preaseisiuinti/minister-ogorman-publishes-the-findings-of-a-12-month-review-of-the-national-childcare-scheme-ncs/
[25] https://www.ibec.ie/connect-and-learn/insights/insights/2024/04/24/csi---childcare-matters
[26] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=IE&name_desc=false

Conclusion



The UK stands at a turning point. By committing to long-term reform and a subsidised national model, government can deliver:

- **Affordable, high-quality wraparound care.**
- **Economic growth through greater workforce participation and productivity.**
- **Equal opportunities for all children, regardless of postcode or income.**

The question is not if we reform - but whether we can act quickly enough to protect families and secure the future of wraparound childcare beyond 2026.

contact@saca-pvi.co.uk

saca-pvi.co.uk

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.