

NEWS RELEASE

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Innovative childcare to be recognised in first ever national top family friendly employer awards

Employers in Scotland who excel in helping their staff negotiate the tricky world of childcare are being urged to enter a new national award scheme established to recognise family friendly practices.

Businesses, local authorities, government bodies, charities, social enterprises, are all being urged to showcase how they help employees juggle work and family life for the new '**Best for Childcare Award**', with the closing date just over a month away.

The winning outstanding employer will have shown how it is leading the way: this could be through directly providing childcare; providing childcare vouchers or information; or even unheard of innovative practices around childcare.

The award is being sponsored by [Parenting across Scotland](#), a partnership of high-profile charities which offers support to parents and carers in Scotland and which has campaigned for better childcare provision in Scotland.

Childcare has become an increasingly important area in Scotland due to spiraling costs, changes to legislation due to come in this year that will affect flexible working, and the recently set up [commission for childcare reform](#) (3). The Scottish Government's National Parenting Strategy also gives a number of commitments around childcare and supporting parents looking to get back to work.

Currently, the average cost of sending a child under the age of two to nursery in Scotland part time (25 hours) is £106.04 a week (£5,514 a year) – 4.8% more expensive than 2013. (4)

Clare Simpson, Parenting Across Scotland Project Manager, said combining work with home life can be stressful for many families.

"Childcare is the single biggest factor that allows parents, particularly mothers, to return, or start work or training. Investment in high quality childcare has a positive impact on children too," she said.

"Many mothers want to work, or increase their hours but surveys consistently show that many parents are put off by the high cost of childcare and lack of flexibility from their employers. To allow employers to recruit from the best possible workforce, we must see them playing a bigger role. (5)

Ms Simpson added: "The Scottish Government has prioritised making Scotland the best place to grow up, legislation on flexible working is set to change, and we need to find modern solutions to make juggling family life and work easier. Ensuring parents can find high quality affordable childcare, get secure work and achieve a good work-life balance is fundamental to ensuring Scotland's economic future.

“Higher rates of maternal employment have a positive impact on the whole economy, and so it is in all our interests, especially employers, to achieve this. This award will showcase the work places that are already making this a reality.”

There are many things employers can do to promote childcare to staff. For example, some large companies offer workplace provision. Work places could also provide childcare vouchers, or information about childcare, or offer leave to cover emergency childcare, like sickness.

The **Best in Childcare** award is part of the wider ‘**Scottish Top Employers for Working Families Awards**’, which are being run in partnership between Parenting across Scotland, Fathers Network Scotland and Working Families. More information about the awards can be found at <http://www.topemployersforworkingfamilies.org.uk/index.php/scottish-special-awards>.

The ceremony will be held in the Autumn. The closing date for entries is June 14.

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Notes to editors:

1. Parenting across Scotland partners are: Aberlour Childcare Trust; Capability Scotland; Children 1st; Children in Scotland; Families Outside; One Parent Families Scotland; Relationships Scotland; Scottish Adoption; The Spark (formerly Scottish Marriage Care). Together the partners work with thousands of parents throughout Scotland.
2. For more information about the awards, visit <http://www.topemployersforworkingfamilies.org.uk/index.php/scottish-special-awards>
3. The new commission for childcare reform will spend the next 12 months investigating ways to improve childcare in Scotland. It has been set up as part of an alliance by Children in Scotland, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) and the Scottish Government. Read more at <http://thirdforcenews.org.uk/youth/news/new-partnership-to-create-childcare-revolution-in-scotland#I9D0ZpehaKkuzQcs.99>
4. 2014 Scottish Childcare report – Family and Childcare trust: <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/News/scottish-parents-face-toxic-mix-of-rising-childcare-costs-and-lack-of-childcare-places>
5. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/childmind-the-gap-reforming-childcare-to-support-mothers-into-work>
6. Making Scotland’s workplaces more family friendly is a key commitment in the Scottish Government’s [National Parenting Strategy](#). In 2014, new legislation (the Children and Families Bill UK) will bring in new rights relating to maternity and

paternity leave, and flexible working. A number of these changes – for example, Shared Parental Leave and Right to Request Flexible Working, are not due to be implemented until 2015. For a full breakdown of the provisions of the bill visit <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP13-11/children-and-families-bill> **but please note only the employment law provisions i.e. parental leave and flexible working apply to Scotland.**