

## **17234 - New submission from Early Years Strategy - Public Submissions**

There is strong evidence to show that infants and toddlers raised with the love, care, and attention of their biological mother are more likely to be emotionally and psychologically healthy children and adolescents. The Early Years Strategy should focus on the wellbeing of parents, especially mothers, as a core strategy for improving outcomes for children.

Many policies focus on a woman's return to work as an expectation and desired outcome. For example, "affordable" (read: not free) child care encourages mothers to return to work, as the risk of financial losses are decreased. However, we know that no child carer raises a child better than that child's mother. If governments are genuinely committed to gender equity and women's economic security, as well as the wellbeing of children, mothers should be supported to continue to raise their children without being financially coerced to work. This means supporting and subsidising families rather than further investing in child care. This may involve policies to increase limits on family incomes before incurring financial penalties, directly providing women with a parenting payment to replace a salary (partly to ensure she is not completely reliant on a partner, thus reducing her susceptibility to abuse), and paying superannuation on maternity leave.