# MPs Warn of Challenges in England's Childcare Expansion Plans



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The UK Government is facing major challenges in its plan to expand the number of childcare places for working families by September 2025. The Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) highlighted the risk to childcare quality due to this rapid expansion. The Department for Education (DfE) estimated the need for 85,000 new childcare places and 40,000 additional staff for the full rollout of the childcare offer.

The PAC emphasized that creating these places presents a significant challenge, given the sector's history of underfunding, cost pressures, and staffing crises. The current policy staggered rollout allows working parents of two-year-olds to access 15 hours of funded childcare, extending to those with children older than nine months by September 2023. The full rollout of 30 hours per week is expected a year later.

A DfE pilot program aims to repurpose unused school spaces to increase capacity. However, PAC Chairwoman Dame Meg Hillier warned of potential adverse effects on places for disadvantaged children or those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

In addition to policy expansion, a £6.5 million recruitment campaign was launched in February, and the DfE announced a £1,000 cash payment for new recruits. Despite these efforts, the PAC doubts their sufficiency to meet the staffing demand, calling for a long-term workforce strategy and interim milestones to ensure the expansion stays on track. A National Audit Office report also pointed out the “significant uncertainties” due to a lack of early sector consultation.

**Key Details:**
- **What:** Expansion of childcare places for working families
- **Where:** England
- **When:** Full rollout by September 2025
- **Who:** UK Government, Department for Education (DfE), Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Chairwoman Dame Meg Hillier

The large-scale expansion includes plans to change staff-to-child ratios, but PAC warns this may threaten the quality of care unless carefully managed.