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Overseas providers and investors attracted to growing UK children's nurseries market

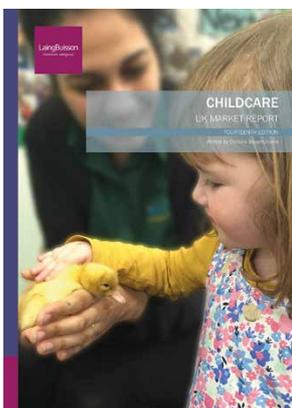
The UK market for formal childcare is enjoying a period of expansion as parents and government realise the importance of early education to overall child development. Worth £5.3 billion in 2015/16, more than 530,000 currently attend nurseries which provide full day care nursery services for children under the age of five.

This growing demand has not escaped the attention of investors and providers and several European, North American and Asian companies are entering the market. One of the largest new entrants to the UK is French company, Les Petits Chaperons Rouges, the number two provider in France and now the seventh largest in the UK.

Demand is also driving invention. Of note, Eco-nurseries are providing flexibility of supply in the UK childcare market. This report explores this and the wider benefits of child wellbeing offered by competing providers.

However, the market is not without its challenges. Changes in Statutory Maternity Pay and funding for places for 3 and 4-year-olds has reduced 'custom per child' from an average of 54 months to 28 months and the sector still suffers from government underfunding - this is in spite of the 15 hours and 30 hours policies. Meanwhile, although staff training is improving the onus to provide a good quality, well-trained workforce is on the employer, putting further upward pressure on fees.

Nonetheless, change in the market is creating new opportunities. The desire to retain women in the national workforce, means there is pressure on government to come up with the correct childcare strategy to support parents, and as millennials come of age, it seems that London is losing its place as the 'go-to' place for work, making the need for high quality of early years childcare a truly UK-wide market.



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