

Petitioner submission of 16 March 2022

PE1907/D - Provide funded early learning & childcare for all 2-year olds in Scotland

As a nursery practitioner and mother to a baby born in 2020 I see these challenges arising daily both at work and at home. Babies born in lockdown have known no different to faces covered/mask wearing and had a vast amount of time with little to no socialisation outside of their home, with their peers. When these babies were small they could not attend baby groups as they were closed down, now many parents have returned to work and are unable to attend also. I fully believe that 2 year olds affected by lockdowns and the pandemic restrictions should be allowed and given the opportunity to attend a nursery setting, the same opportunity that currently is given to parents on universal credit, children in care etc. 2 year old funding should not be means tested, especially when across the board they have all missed out on these basic yet vital opportunities. If anything these lockdown babies should all have the same access to funded learning and childcare, regardless of their parents' financial situation etc.

The BMJ medical journal states;

Babies born during the pandemic's first year scored slightly lower on a developmental screening test at six months compared with babies born just before the pandemic, a small study has found. Research published last year as a preprint found that babies born during the pandemic scored lower on standard measures of verbal, motor, and overall cognitive ability.²³ The longitudinal study of 672 children from Rhode Island that has run since 2011 found that babies born after the pandemic began showed a drop of 22 points on the Mullen scales of early learning.

The author of the article at Scientific American, David J. Lewkowicz, makes the point that babies begin lip-reading at 8 months. Lewkowicz, a senior scientist at Haskins Laboratories and an adjunct professor in the Yale Child Study Center, Yale University, says that masks mean babies are missing important visual cues about language. Which is exactly what we surmised back in October:

Infants and toddlers watch our faces for important clues about language and social situations. That is why it is so important that they can see our faces without anything getting in the way, for instance, a face mask that covers mouth and nose. But what happens when babies can't see half our faces—our mouths, cheeks, and noses—in everyday situations?

By reading lips, says David J.Lewkowicz, babies glean important visual cues that help them for instance, figure out “which face goes with which voice.” But when the adults around them are wearing face masks, babies miss out on the information they need to make sense of what they hear. (Kars4Kids Parenting)

Thank you very much for reading, I hope this information helps to get across what I am hoping to achieve for the "lockdown babies" as now is the time we need to act, so they can catch up and thrive moving onto preschool and primary education.