

### Indicator 1: Cost of raising a child

It now costs an average of £200,000 to raise a child from birth to the age of 21 in this country. That equates to around £800 a month. Many couples dip into poverty once they have children. The cost of a nursery place for a child aged over two in England rose by 5.1 per cent last year – almost double inflation despite the UK being in recession. A society in which parenthood can cause poverty is not a family friendly society. Childcare options can vary wildly from area to area.

Family friendly verdict: D grade.

D

FPI says: The government's support for the provision of free nursery care is admirable. But such services only save parents money if they are family friendly. We need implementation of the government's promise to allow parents to use their weekly 15 hours of free nursery care for three and four year olds flexibly, over a minimum of three days.

### Indicator 2: Maternity and paternity leave

UK mothers who are classed as employees have the right to one year of maternity leave and nine months of maternity pay. Significant numbers of women are not entitled to statutory maternity pay, and many in casual employment don't feel able to claim their entitlement. Men, providing they meet certain conditions, receive either one or two weeks of paternity leave. Maternity and paternity pay is inadequately low. Maternity pay for the first six weeks is at 90 per cent of a mother's average earnings, but it then drops below minimum wage level. Statutory paternity pay is also less than minimum wage.

Family friendly verdict: C grade.

C

FPI says: Maternity and paternity pay should be at least at minimum wage level.

### Indicator 3: Elderly care

Britain is a greying society, with an increasing number of people needing personal elderly care. The country is searching desperately for a way to pay for this. It's estimated that over 60,000 older people pay for a place in a care home every year by selling their own home. Surveys show elderly care issues are now of even greater concern to British families than childcare.

Family friendly verdict: D grade.

D

FPI says: We want to see delivery on the coalition government's promise for a commission to report on long-term care within 12 months. Cross-party support will then be needed to solve Britain's elderly care crisis.

### Indicator 4: Work/life balance

British employers are top among European nations in allowing staff to switch from full to part-time work and are among the leaders in offering flexi-time arrangements, according to a study of the EU labour market. A culture change is currently underway in Britain in favour of flexible working. But there is still much progress to be made to allow Britons to properly balance work and family life. The evidence shows flexible working results in more productive employees as well as healthier family relationships.

Family friendly verdict: B grade.

B

FPI says: The coalition government has promised to 'extend the right to request flexible working to all employees, consulting with business on how best to do so' – we would like to see this happen within 12 months. In the longer term, all British workers must have the right to flexible working, not just the right to request flexible working. Employers must be better informed about the issue.

### Indicator 5: Affordable transport

Children face a postcode lottery across the UK as to whether they qualify for free public transport. Children in London, for example, can ride buses for free. But this is rare. Britain's rail fares are by far the highest in Europe. In contemporary UK, with families spread over a greater geographical area, transport costs can impact negatively upon family relationships. A lack of affordable transport prevents poorer families from using state services and causes social isolation among the elderly.

Family friendly verdict: C grade

C

FPI says: The commitment to 'fair pricing for rail passengers' declared by the coalition government must be fleshed-out into a tangible solution to rising costs. Within 12 months, trains should have a national standard child fare.

### Indicator 6: Affordable housing

Newly constructed homes are not providing enough space for family life. 44 per cent of all householders said in a survey (released 2009) they don't have enough space for small children to play safely in the kitchen while meals are being prepared. The UK is also in the grip of an affordable housing crisis. Buy-to-let landlords benefit from this lack of affordable housing, but young couples who want to start families are the ones who suffer. Britain's housing sector is anything but family-friendly.

Family friendly verdict: D grade

D

FPI says: We have to ensure there are enough affordable houses in the UK for young families. We want to see planning authorities, within the next 12 months, being placed under statutory obligation to consult with families on their space needs before new housing developments.

### Indicator 7: Commercialisation of childhood

84 per cent of parents believe companies target their children too much. The average child in the UK sees between 20,000 and 40,000 TV ads a year. While TV advertising is heavily regulated, particularly with regard to foods high in sugar, salt and fat, far less regulation is applied to the internet. The new coalition government has pledged to confront advertisers who see children as a soft commercial target.

Family friendly verdict: C grade.

C

FPI says: Within 12 months, the government should require advertisers to declare the amount they spend on advertisements for children.

### Indicator 8: Neighbourhoods and green spaces

Family life and bringing up children is not just about what happens in the home, but about the neighbourhood environment. Poorer parents' experience of their neighbourhood is much more negative. Only 35 per cent of the poorest parents think they can do the best for their family in their neighbourhood, compared to 73 per cent of the richest. Poorer families are also less likely to have well-maintained green spaces nearby.

Family friendly verdict: C grade

C

FPI says: Investment is needed to ensure poorer families have access to well-maintained green spaces. This should include exploring ways of keeping space safe and free from vandalism. Neighbourhoods need more affordable activities and safe places for teenagers in which to spend their time.

### Indicator 9: Child and pensioner poverty

The latest figures show that 2.8 million children live in poverty – which is 22 per cent of the child population. 2010 has seen the Child Trust Fund abolished, child tax credits cut for many ordinary families and child benefit frozen for three years. Parents have been left suspecting they are being placed in the front line for economic cuts. Grandparents are being hit financially with the burden of caring for their grandchildren while their overstretched adult children are at work. In 2008-09 there were 1.8 million pensioners in poverty, which equates to 16 per cent of the pensioner population. The UK has one of the worst levels of pensioner poverty in Europe.

Family friendly verdict: C minus grade.

C-

FPI says: Within the next 12 months, the coalition government must establish a system assessing whether Budget cuts are increasing child and pensioner poverty. If it is to meet its commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020, the government must set out detailed plans on how it is to reduce it within 12 months.

### Indicator 10: Our most vulnerable children

There are currently 61,000 children in care in the UK. The majority are there because they suffered abuse or neglect. They are twice as likely to be convicted of a crime, and seven times more likely to be expelled from school. In 2007, just 13 per cent of children in care in England achieved at least five GCSE grades A\*-C, compared with 62 per cent of all children sitting the exams. Six out of ten children in care go on to higher education in Denmark, but in England it is six in a hundred.

Family friendly verdict: D grade

D

FPI says: Local authorities should work with the whole family to consider wider family placements where children cannot remain safely at home with parents before care proceedings are instigated, except in emergencies. The government must work with the judiciary, local authorities and families to make sure outcomes for vulnerable children, and particularly children in care, improve.

**UK's Overall Family Friendly score for 2010: C minus**



# THE UK FAMILY FRIENDLY REPORT CARD 2010

From the Family and Parenting Institute  
[www.familyandparenting.org](http://www.familyandparenting.org)



The Prime Minister David Cameron has said he wants Britain to become the most family friendly country in Europe. So how far does Britain have to go before it can be considered a truly family friendly society? In a timely move for exam season, the Family and Parenting Institute is launching this Family Friendly Report Card, awarding the country school-style grades on areas of family policy.



The Family and Parenting Institute champions families.

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This Family Friendly Report Card compiles research on families from a range of sources. A full source list can be found on our website.

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