

# Education Minister announces continuation of Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme

Education Minister, Paul Givan, has today announced that the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme (NICSS) will continue into 2026-27.

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# war on Iran shows dependence on fossil fuels makes economies vulnerable to oil shocks

11 March 2026 / 10 March 2026 by [Andrew Bell](#)

Responding to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) finding that the cost of Net Zero is less than the cost of the 2022 Ukraine oil price shock, the Green Party has today said we need to transition to clean energy as quickly as possible to protect people and the economy from future oil shocks.

Contrary to Reform UK's unfounded claims about the cost of Net Zero, the CCC has today confirmed that the benefits of Net Zero outweigh the costs: "for every £1 spent there will be £2 to £4 in benefits" they conclude.

**Green Party leader Zack Polanski said:**

"Our dependency on fossil fuels is a strategic vulnerability for the UK – as evidenced by the war between Russia and Ukraine and the now the war on Iran. We need to make the transition to clean energy as fast as we can to protect people and our economy from the price shocks and instability that come when oil prices spike."

**Green Party MP Carla Denyer, who leads on energy security and net zero, said:**

"This report makes a compelling case: that cutting carbon emissions makes sense for our economy, as well as for the safety of our climate.

"The numbers speak for themselves – investing in Net Zero pays dividends, avoiding the billions of pounds in climate damages that we would face as the cost of not acting, while also giving us warmer homes, cheaper bills, cleaner air and healthier lives for us and future generations."

## Protecting Children Online

Tech companies have for far too long treated children as data to be mined rather than young people to be protected. They have let harmful content roam free on their sites from perpetuating negative body image to amplifying extreme and violent content. They have built addictive algorithms designed to keep children endlessly doom-scrolling at the expense of their mental health.

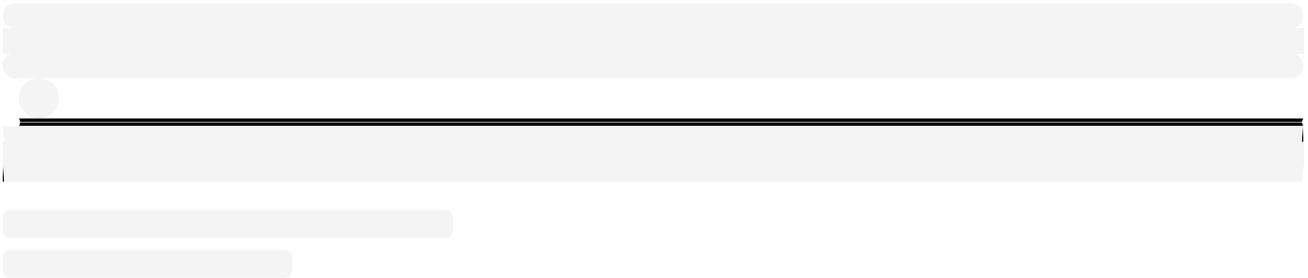
**The Government's response to this has been disappointing.** Rather than taking firm action, they are giving themselves the power to potentially act later, instead of implementing the sensible policies we have long called for. This includes failing to fully implement our proposal to immediately raise the age of data consent to 16, which would ban social media giants from harvesting children's data to feed them addictive, algorithmically generated content.

We also have serious concerns about how much power this Bill puts into the hands of just one person. As it stands, a single government minister could decide which social media platforms to ban using secondary legislation, which bypasses full parliamentary scrutiny. We raised the very real concern that a future government of any political stripe could use these sweeping powers to control or categorise platforms without proper oversight.

**For the campaigners, charities, and thousands of parents crying out for change, the Government's plan simply isn't good enough.**



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That is why we put party politics aside and voted for a cross-party amendment to ban harmful social media for under-16s. This was not an endorsement of the Conservative approach; it was a rejection of the Government's current, inadequate plans. By voting this way, we are telling the Government to think again, return to the table, and listen to our calls for a smart, future-proof strategy that is led by evidence, not the whims of a single individual.

Ahead of the debate, **we also tabled our own amendment to advocate for a film-style age rating for online platforms, including social media.** This would mean platforms would be required to age-gate content at an appropriate level according to a new Ofcom framework looking at the addictiveness of their

platform design, the impact on children's mental health, and the harmfulness of the content they host. The default age for social media would be 16, and the burden would be on Big Tech to prove their platforms are safe before that rating could be lowered. For sites hosting violence or pornography, the age would be set even higher.

Although our approach, **supported by over 40 children's charities like the NSPCC**, was not selected this time, we are not giving up. As this Bill continues through Parliament, we will keep fighting for a common-sense approach to online safety that puts the wellbeing of children above everything else.

**Munira Wilson MP**

*Spokesperson for Education, Children and Families*

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## [Urgent call for action as rising oil and gas costs hit households and businesses](#)

Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald has written to the British Government warning that the rapid rise in global oil and natural gas prices is now placing significant pressure on households and businesses across the north.

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## [Kimmins announces new application process for demand-led residents' parking schemes](#)

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has announced that a new application process for residents' parking schemes will open in April 2026, providing a demand led pathway for residents to bring forward requests for consideration.