

Why quality childcare is important for low-income children

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High-quality childcare can help close developmental gaps in children from low socio-economic backgrounds, according to new research from the University of Adelaide.

University of Adelaide Public Health PhD student Angela Gialamas measured the cognitive and socio-emotional development of [children](#) who attended [childcare](#) from 2-3 years of age. She found that by ages 4-5 there was little difference in the developmental outcomes of children from lower-income families, compared to those from higher-income families.

The research was published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

Ms Gialamas says the research found higher-quality childcare relationships among lower-income children buffered the effect of poorer developmental outcomes at school entry.

"We found that the gap in [developmental outcomes](#) at ages 4-5 between lower and higher income families experiencing the highest quality of care was small, highlighting the positive contribution higher-quality relationships in childcare has for children from lower-income backgrounds," Ms Gialamas says.

Ms Gialamas says a range of family and environmental factors can affect children's school readiness.

"Research evidence suggests that family income is associated with children's cognitive and behavioural outcomes," says Ms Gialamas.

"Socioeconomic gaps in children's achievement and behaviour open up early in life and remain fairly constant through the school years," she says.

According to Ms Gialamas, high-quality childcare may be particularly beneficial for low income children.

"Childcare exposes children to educational resources, social interactions with same age peers and may help them learn skills and behaviours they require in [school](#)," says Ms Gialamas.

"Important aspects of high-quality childcare include warm and responsive relationships between carer and child as well as children being actively engaged in activities that fosters their early learning," she says.

More information: "Social inequalities in childcare quality and their effects on children's development at school entry: findings from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children." *J Epidemiol Community Health* jech-2014-205031 Published Online First: 31 March 2015 [DOI: 10.1136/jech-2014-205031](#)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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