



The Duchess Of Cambridge  
Kensington Palace  
London W8 4PU

14<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Your Royal Highness,

I would like to thank you on behalf of the organizations Mothers at Home Matter (UK), Haro (Sweden), HJEM (Denmark) and Ole Henrik Hansen (Associate Professor, Dept of Early Childhood Education, Denmark) for your energy and commitment in highlighting the developmental needs of very young children. The Royal Foundation: Centre for Early Childhood is a fantastic resource and has inspired many of us, as has your own example and commitment to making a positive change for the youngest in our society.

It is a positive development that you are seeking best practices both here and abroad. The Nordic countries have often been heralded as beacons of light in the way they approach the Early Years.

However, I hope you will forgive me highlighting what we understand to be the situation in Denmark in terms of how challenging it is for mothers to care for their children in a home setting. I enclose one of our newsletters, in which a mother who lives in Denmark opens up about the hostility she has faced regarding her attempts to care for her children full time. We are aware from the Danish National Organization for Stay at Home Parents (HJEM) that many children in Denmark have to go into external childcare settings for long hours from the age of 10 months. By the age of one, around 90% of all Danish children are in childcare settings outside the home. There is a plethora of research demonstrating the negative effect of long hours of separation from mothers at a very young age, clearly visible in raised cortisol levels.

Similarly, Sweden, whilst outwardly seen as a worldwide success story for women and childcare, in fact is suffering the effects of increasing mental health problems and anxiety in women and children, as well as worsening exam results in schools.

In Denmark, there are major challenges in educating sufficient staff to take care of the children in the Danish preschools. In addition, the failures of the entire pre-school teacher education in Denmark, has been the subject of a comprehensive study conducted by the Danish Ministry of Education Research. Whereas 75% achieved a satisfactory rating, only 19% were assessed to be good, and none were of the highest quality.

One thing we all share in common is how best to meet the needs of our young children. We MAHM, Haro and HJEM campaign to make the choice possible for a parent, but more particularly the mother, to be available to care during these critical years. This choice is being denied in all these countries by economic and societal systems, which penalize this choice. We continue to question why there

is so much funding poured into professional bodies to fix very wide concern about poor mental health, when one key thing that could help to prevent some of these problems – having a mother (parent) available - is being denied to our children.

We would be honoured if you would read the articles about Denmark and Sweden, highlighted in the newsletters, and we would be delighted to share our research and the experiences of the many mothers, fathers and children we represent, either with you, or someone within the Early Years Royal Foundation.

Yours faithfully,

Anne Fennell  
Chair Mothers at Home Matter  
[chair@mothersathomematter.com](mailto:chair@mothersathomematter.com)

Madeleine Wallin  
International Coordinator  
Haro ([www.haro.se](http://www.haro.se))  
Sweden

Christina Tengstedt Rasmussen  
Chair and spokesperson  
HJEM (Danish National Organization for Stay at Home Parents)

Ole Henrik Hansen  
Associate professor  
Aarhus University, Dept of Early Childhood Education  
Denmark

[www.mothersathomematter.com](http://www.mothersathomematter.com)