

# Baby Boxes being delivered in Scotland from tomorrow

The Scottish Government is ready to start sending out baby boxes to all newborn babies due from tomorrow. They claim that the policy which has already been trialled in Scotland since earlier in the year, and which follows a model used in Finland where the baby box has been used for 70 years, will tackle inequality and promote health.



Minister for Childcare and Early Years Mark McDonald and Chief Medical Officer Dr Catherine Calderwood with one of the baby boxes to be distributed across Scotland from tomorrow.

Registration for delivery of the baby boxes from this month opened in June this year, and the boxes will either be sent to a home or other preferred address.

We were invited along to an industrial unit in Edinburgh where the boxes are already being packed ready for distribution. As the scheme opens tomorrow there are a lot of baby boxes to be delivered at first, although the speed of delivery is then expected to ease. From January next year the boxes will be delivered about a month ahead of the due delivery date for each baby.

Along with the advice leaflets we were advised that the boxes contain 48 items designed to make life for new parents a little easier, and also to give the baby somewhere to sleep. The box has a mattress in the bottom and with the bedding supplied it can be used as a replacement for a Moses basket. Each box has been packed with all of the essential items for babies up to six months old which the new parent might need to

'give them the best start in life'. There is also space on the lid for the baby's name and birth details, and they have deliberately been produced in black and white so that they can be used for colouring in.

The exterior of the baby box was designed by Edinburgh Napier graphic design student Leanne Young. It features Highland cows, squirrels and the Loch Ness Monster.

*Baby boxes will be delivered to all babies due to be born in Scotland from and after tomorrow We saw the first ones being packed [pic.twitter.com/agRLkZkfjB](https://pic.twitter.com/agRLkZkfjB)*

*– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [August 14, 2017](#)*

Mark McDonald Minister for Childcare and Early Years, himself a father of two young children, was enthusiastic about the scheme. "It's fantastic to see this policy coming to fruition ahead of the national rollout. It's great to be here at the distribution centre meeting some of the staff and seeing some of the boxes being put together.

We asked how much the scheme is costing The Scottish Government and the Minister answered that each box costs £160 which works out at an annual budget of around £8.8million. We queried whether that was in line with projections made earlier in the year and the Minister explained : "The boxes in the pilot scheme actually were more expensive as a unit cost because there was a smaller number of boxes, so we have actually been able to realise quite a significant economy of scale in terms of the national rollout compared to the boxes in the pilot scheme.

"One of the things that we have done as a result of the pilot scheme is looked at what we're offering within the box and revised some of our offering in terms of the items contained within it based on feedback from parents."

Asked about the difference that these boxes will make to the lives of newborn babies Mr McDonald said : “Ultimately this is about ensuring that all children in Scotland regardless of the circumstances they are born into have the very best start in life.

“That is essentially what we are doing here. We are providing a box of essential items which will be of great benefit to parents and to their children. We think that is something that is a very worthwhile use of public money.”



We questioned whether there should perhaps be some form of means testing for eligibility, but the Minister was adamant that would not be a good idea. He explained : “I think when you get into the realms of means testing, you get into the realms of additional cost, so there is a question over whether you would actually save money in any case. No child chooses the circumstances they are born into so I don’t think it’s right at the very beginning of that child’s life for us to say they should not receive this box of essential items.

Dr Catherine Calderwood the Chief Medical Officer did not quote any specific scientific research about the use of the boxes, but told us that she believes they are crucial to children’s development. She said : “We know that sharing a bed with a parent is a risk of cot death so this box provides somewhere else for the baby to sleep that is safe. What we are going to do is evaluate that sleeping space and to look at our Scottish cot death rates to see if this box makes an impact.

“It has been used in Finland for 70 years, but has not been universally rolled out in other countries. Scotland is a first for rolling out the baby box with the intention of evaluating its impact.

“This is a gift from Scottish Government. It contains clothes and equipment, books, toys, a changing mat and very

importantly, offers a safe place for babies to sleep.

“What we heard from our families who had the boxes as part of the pilot was that it really made a difference to them, they really valued some of the clothing and equipment. Importantly they hadn’t thought about where the baby was going to sleep, and the safe sleeping messages that come both in the box and on the lid, and the provision of the box with a mattress sheet and the blanket made them think about safe sleeping for their babies before the baby was born.”