

## Baby Shambles!

### One mother's opinion on the real value of child benefit.

The price to keep your baby fed and clean nowadays is astonishing. Just to feed your child is £6 and that's just for baby milk. If you do feed your baby (which is necessary to keep them alive) then they will go to the toilet, so you will always need nappies.

What I'm trying to find out is how much the price of nappies, wipes and baby milk formula has changed in the last 20 years.

I'm a mother and I know how hard it is to manage on the £17.45 a week that the government give us to buy the necessities that a child needs. It doesn't get easier over time either because the older the child gets the more food they eat and milk they drink, plus they then need juice but you can't give them any kind of juice, it has to be baby juice.

I also spoke to a mother who had her child 16 years ago to get her point of view on the situation and to see whether or not the price of necessities to look after your child has changed much since she had her child.

This is what she had to say: "When I had my child I received milk tokens. I had to go to the nearest health clinic to collect the milk. Parents still receive milk tokens but they can now use them in shops. You can also use them to buy fresh fruit in supermarkets.

"I didn't use baby wipes because they didn't have the baby soft wipes that they do now, so nearly everyone used cotton wool and water. I don't think the price has changed much in the last 16 years due to the fact that there is now a wider range of wipes so the companies keep their prices low to keep customers happy and to fight off other companies.

"I also think that nappies were more expensive 16 years ago due to the same factor as wipes: there is a much wider range of nappies on the market now rather than back when I had my child. Eco-friendly nappies came out when I had my child and people were encouraged to use them instead."

Today in 2007 a pack of 32 nappies costs £5.99, but if you buy the Active Fit brand for toddlers and/or babies that are crawling you only get 24 for the same price. A tub of baby milk formula which will last any child barely 7 days cost £5.99. Baby wipes cost £4.47 for a double pack. All of these items come to a total of £16.45. So, take that away from the £17.45 a week that we get to buy things for our child. It leaves you with £1 for a whole week.

I also spoke to members of the public about what they thought about the price of nappies, wipes and milk in 2007. One person stated that they thought that nappies and milk should be available on the NHS the same way that condoms, paracetamol and other necessities like that are. Why should it be different just because it's for a baby!

If you are not receiving benefits of a certain type then you don't qualify for milk tokens so you're paying full price for baby formula. When you receive milk tokens you have to use two of the £2.80 tokens so you only have to add 40p. Some shops don't accept two tokens at the same time so you either have to pay £3.10 or wait until you go to another store.

Some shops do store cards on which you can collect points, but you can't use the points on baby formula. If you run out of money and milk then you wouldn't even be able to purchase baby milk formula on the card because that's the one thing you can't get points on the card for. Confusing? And ridiculous considering you can get a specific card for mothers and nearly every mother buys baby milk formula.

My personal view on this situation is that yes, the price situation is unbelievable but today in 2007 we have a better range of baby products.

Even though many years have passed the government still thinks it is possible to live off £17.45 a week. Even if the government added just another £7.55 to round it up to £25 it would make it a lot easier just to know that you have that spare bit of money just in case you do run out of something.

### About this article

This article was written by Emma Hannington, a member of Headliners' Project Subway group based at [Coram Parents Centre](#).

### 1 comment

The cheapest way to feed a baby - no?

"Every mother buys formula milk". Untrue, in fact a large number of women breastfeed, I am intrigued as to why, in an article all about the rising cost of parenting, you have not mentioned once the money that can be saved by breastfeeding a baby not to mention the far better nutrition of that child.

Winkywen from Cornwall, 23 September 2008 15:07

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