

# Eastern Daily Press

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## Challenge over rise in cost of childcare must be tackled

Today's figures will confirm what many parents and grandparents will already know from bitter experience – the cost of childcare has risen quickly.

With warnings that costs could rise further amid an increase in the living wage, it is important that the reasons for this are examined.

Returning to work after having a child can be a costly business.

While not all mothers and fathers want to go back to work – a choice that should be fully supported – many others want to, and they should have the option.

Many families rely on the kindness of grandparents to cut their childcare bills.

But sadly not everybody has that luxury.

Childcare was rightly at the heart of the general election fight last year. The Conservatives – who were victorious – promised to extend free childcare.

But translating this into reality is a complex business. There are already fears that the extra help with childcare may not be as widespread as first announced.

Childcare enterprises – many of which are small businesses – warn that there is not enough investment. They are seeing their costs rise. And while the living wage is to be welcomed, childcare is an industry, along with social care, which is labour intensive and can often have tight margins.

It is clear that it is a big challenge which faces our policy-makers, but it is one that must be tackled. Investment in childcare has economic benefits – skilled people can return to the workforce, but quality is also vital in giving the most disadvantaged children a good start in life.

## Inspiring initiative

The importance of digital technology and the economy that has fast grown up around it is becoming ever more evident.

Norwich has been identified as being of increasing national significance as a tech cluster for the second year running in this year's Tech Nation report.

And the number of high-growth small businesses in both Norwich and Ipswich is already well above the national average. That is why it is so important that the region grasps the undeniable opportunities which the digital world offers.

So the launch of a new initiative, TechEast, to champion technology firms and encourage investment to the region should be welcomed. It aims to make the East of England one of the UK's top five tech clusters by 2020, creating 5,000 jobs and adding £650m to the regional economy.

It is fitting therefore, that the launch will take place at the BT Tower in London, one of the capital's most familiar landmarks and a building which represents Britain's tradition and past achievement of being at the leading edge of technology. Let's hope it will help inspire today's digital entrepreneurs and innovators in technology to even greater success in future.

## Villagers' pub campaign

The villagers of Beeston, who have launched a fight to save their public house The Ploughshare, do not need to look far for inspiration.

Firstly, there is boxing legend Jem Mace who, in 1831, was born in Beeston and lived next door to the pub, before going on to become middleweight champion of the world.

Then, a few miles away, are the people of Shouldham, near King's Lynn who, in September 2014, reopened their own pub the King's Arms after campaigning to save it, backed by the EDP.

Go on, we're all behind you. You can beat the bell and raise the money before time is called.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

# iwitness24



■ The blue tits were loving the sun and the blossom at Blickling in this photograph by Susan Cockaday. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## There's no need to apologise – what you say is quite OK

Peter  
Trudgill



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My fellow EDP columnist Lynne Mortimer has ventured into the realms of grammar recently.

In an amusing column, she has written about bad manners, as well as about what she calls "sloppy grammar".

Her column is, as always, entertaining, but for me it's a pity that she includes these two different topics in a way which suggests they are all of a piece.

She agrees with a correspondent – as we surely all do – that blowing your nose at a concert in Norwich Cathedral and then publicly examining the contents of your handkerchief is bad manners.

But then Lynne also seems to be suggesting that having written in her column "I was sat" rather than "I was sitting" is an act of similar moral turpitude.

She certainly feels that it is something she ought to apologise for – and she has actually done so.

I feel rather sad about this. There is nothing at all wrong with saying "I was sat".

So I regret that Lynne feels she also has to explain this "lapse" of hers by saying that it results from "the grammatical uncertainty that arises from being local".

I would have thought that being local, in our area, is something to very pleased



■ Were they sat, or were they sitting? It doesn't really matter, says Peter Trudgill.

about. And, if you are pleased about that, then why not write in a local way, in our local newspaper, without feeling you need to apologise?

Interestingly, though, "I was sat" does not strike me as being a very local usage anyway.

It is something which people in the south-east of England and East Anglia have only started saying recently, if at all.

The first person I ever heard saying it, about 40 years ago, came from Bristol.

And the other people who I heard using this construction in those days came from

parts of the Midlands and the North.

What has happened is what often occurs – a linguistic form has spread from one part of our country to another. The usage is new here and, as is often the case with innovations in language, if people notice them, they tend not to like them.

Some complainers reckon that "I was stood on the corner" is wrong because no one has stood you there.

But it's no different from saying "he was crouched in a corner" or "I was stretched on the sofa". No one had stretched you there – you did it all by yourself.