

# MONEYWEEK

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## The disruptor shaking up nurseries



Brett Wigdortz ticks all the “start-up founder” boxes, says Helen Rumbelow in *The Times*. “Trainers, a deep American accent, a name like a tech entrepreneur in a sitcom”, and a cool office with nothing to sit on but a swinging chair. Wigdortz is the founder and leader of Teach First, an organisation that recruits graduates and trains them to teach inner-city children for two years. It is now the largest graduate recruiter in the UK. Wigdortz went on to co-found Teach For All, an international organisation that replicates the model in 53 countries. Now, Wigdortz has another business idea, this time for infants.

As working parents with young children will know, pre-school education in Britain is expensive. In London, 25 hours per week at a nursery or with a childminder costs an average of £758 a month. The cost “quickly feels bankrupting”, especially if the parents work part time or if there’s another sibling. The UK market for formal childcare was valued at £5.5bn in 2018. The population is growing and mothers are working more, so demand is booming. Despite that, supply is falling. Between 2016 and 2018, the number of individual nurseries declined by 20%, while in the five years to 2018 the number of childminders fell by 27%. According to one report, the UK has a shortage of one million childcare places.

And so Wigdortz’s idea for Tiney was born, which was to form a hybrid of nursery and childminder, or a string of “tiny” nurseries that “combine the high-quality educational curriculum of an institution with the attention and setting of a domestic home”. Tiney provides training and branding, and takes a 10% cut of the childminders’ income. As with Teach First, Wigdortz, now in his mid-40s, is hoping the idea will “really grow” and lead to “system change” in this country.