

# Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

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## **Response to publication of the Christie Commission report**

Children in Scotland believes that the Christie Commission report could play a powerful and positive role in reshaping Scotland's public services – but only if it is a spur to bold action and rigorous evidence by government at all levels. Our concern is that it might lead only to more talk and minor investments in marginal (albeit worthwhile) pilot projects.

Along with the Susan Deacon's recent early years report (*Joining the Dots*) and the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee's past and forthcoming work on preventative spending, the Christie Commission call for greater emphasis on actions that will diminish the need for costly remedial public services and crisis interventions is welcome and needed. And, while the public sector must take a leadership role in this direction (including by a serious reallocation of existing resources), the voluntary sector should have a prominent role in both the planning and implementation of these desired action to prevent harm rather than primarily responding after the fact.

Children in Scotland has made, and will continue to offer, specific recommendations that take forward the general emphasis of the Christie Commission on: 1) building services around people and communities; 2) engagement and empowerment; and, 3) ending fragmentation by promoting the integration of public services. The evidence and examples we have gathered both within and beyond Scotland point to the need for the following tangible major shifts in the planning and delivery of public services:

- an emphasis on universal services which fully combine education and care through the early years, based on an integrated charging policy, and which are fully available and accessible to children with additional support needs. The current increase in the pre-fives population and the decrease in the number of places in early years services comes at a time when the [EC Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care](#) has drawn attention to the importance of a universal network of services which integrate education with care. The Communication has also clarified that the so called Barcelona targets which member states signed in 2002 refer to full day services. The Communication offers a framework

which can be used by Scotland to develop a fully integrated early years system which can both assist in addressing child poverty and inequality and support economic growth.

- Children in Scotland embraces the point that there is important preventative action that should be taken in relation to all age groups and should include an expansion in pre birth as well as early years support. Fully including the growing number of babies and young children children focus (heading toward 60,000 births per year) means that the harm prevented at the outset of life will translate into decades of major savings to the public purse.
- treating and funding schools as community resources that should be the hub of creative, mutually-reinforcing public services across ages and that should promote intergenerational cohesion and collaboration. This, in turn, should lead to the implementation of promising, already evidence-validated ideas about changing the children and young people's workforce in efficient and effective ways.
- There are significant opportunities for continued workforce reform, taking forward the proposals that developed out of the Working it out debate on the future shape of the children's sector workforce. In particular, building services around people and communities requires new approaches to qualifications, job roles and shared skills across the sector.  
[www.childrenscotland.org.uk/workforce](http://www.childrenscotland.org.uk/workforce) and  
[www.childrenscotland.org.uk/wfi](http://www.childrenscotland.org.uk/wfi)
- regarding and involving mothers/fathers/carers -- and children and young people themselves -- not merely as clients, cases or service users, but rather as people with significant rights and roles in making needed public service reforms a reality. There is a good deal of rhetoric in favour of participation and partnership, but this is too rarely reflected in the operations of the public sector. That positive rhetoric must now start to be matched by the ways in which the public sector thinks, plans and behaves.
- routinely gathering, analysing and reporting robust evidence about what does and does not work in producing the results for Scotland's people and Scottish society envisaged in the Christie Commission's broad recommendations about public service reform. As it stands, Scotland collects and reveals both too much information that does not answer the "So, what" question about the impacts of public services on their intended beneficiaries – and not enough information that makes it transparent and apparent as to which investments of public results really

make the most positive difference to the current wellbeing and future prospects of our people and communities.

Our hope is that the Christie Commission will lead to major, sustainable, effective action. It has pointed out a good direction of travel. Now, the challenge is actually make the journey it maps.