

Media response 29/11/11

Chancellor's Autumn Statement Nursery entitlements extended in England and Wales but no benefit for children living in poverty in Scotland

Children in Scotland welcomes Chancellor George Osborne's commitment today to fund childcare places for disadvantaged 2-year-olds in England and Wales but calls on the Scottish Government to go further and deliver real change by putting investment in childcare and education at the centre of its strategy for boosting economic recovery.

Investing in universal Early Childhood Education and Care services has an immediate impact by creating jobs, enabling parents to work and stimulating the economy. It protects families with young children – the population group at highest risk – from falling into poverty and moves us closer to meeting European obligations of full time, good quality childcare for at least 33% of children under 3, and 90% of children from 3 to school age.

Sarah Burton, Policy Development Manager at Children in Scotland, said:

“The Chancellor's announcement shows the UK Government is beginning to understand the importance of investing in children's early years, but it won't help Scottish families. It's time for the Scottish Government to take seriously the impact of costly and inaccessible childcare on families and do more than simply copy Westminster's targeted focus. European research shows universal approaches to children's health, early education and care are the only way to bring about real change for young children and their families. We have to match the rhetoric in Scotland with a bigger commitment to practical action.”

Notes to Editors

1. Scotland lags well behind many other countries across Europe in its failure to meet the Barcelona Targets of full time, good quality childcare for at least 33% of children under 3 years old and at least 90% of children aged between 3 and compulsory school age. In Scotland children are entitled to nursery provision from the age of 3 years, but in practice many areas services struggle to meet this entitlement.
2. The European Union's guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care, signed and adopted by all Member States, back these Targets and recommend fully integrated, universally accessible early childhood education and care services as the most effect use of resources to improve health, wellbeing and outcomes for all children and families.
3. Lack of affordable childcare in Scotland is a major contributor to poverty among households with young children, with parents paying 25% of their income for

childcare compared with 8% in Finland and Denmark. Unlike most other EU countries Scotland does not cap costs of childcare to parents.

4. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk.

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