

Investing in the **Wealth of Our Nation** through  
**Smarter Services and Better Childhoods**





# Make children and young people a priority

The 2011 election will be dominated by how we deal with the challenge of unprecedented pressures on finance, resources and services.

Decisions we make now will affect us all – especially the 1.1 million Scots who are under 18. They can't vote, but they will live with the legacy of what we do now for years to come.

Children in Scotland is calling on all political parties, candidates and voters to invest for the future in the wealth of our nation.

## **Children in Scotland is calling on all political parties and candidates to commit to:**

- 1 Combine resources creatively by promoting integrated services and an integrated workforce**
- 2 Strengthen the Early Years Framework by making its implementation a statutory responsibility, funded through the Scottish Parliament's current tax powers**
- 3 Ensure universal availability of good quality, integrated, accessible childcare and early learning opportunities that are truly affordable**
- 4 Ensure income comes back to Scotland from savings in UK budgets achieved through lower take-up of tax credits and benefits in Scotland as a result of increased or better services**
- 5 Maintain long-term cross-party policies that need sustained effort and stable funding**
- 6 Continue frontline services that accomplish their goals efficiently**
- 7 Support innovative projects that accomplish work with children and families, and can be adapted and adopted widely**
- 8 Invest in preventing problems, not fixing them later**
- 9 Consult meaningfully with service users to set realistic expectations of what smarter services can and should deliver**
- 10 Research actual outcomes from public spending on children and young people**

Most of Scotland's eligible voters can identify with at least one child – maybe their own family, a grandchild, or a young person they work with. Voting with that child's interests and wellbeing in mind could make a real difference to their lives and Scotland's future.

Breathing life into this Manifesto requires sharing it widely, asking candidates to embrace its recommendations and encouraging others to vote for the party/candidate they trust to do the most as MSPs to genuinely improve all children's lives and life chances.

You **can** help make this happen. Please **do**.

The May 2011 election will determine the composition of the Scottish Parliament and the leadership of the Scottish Government. *It will set the direction of travel on laws, policies and actions Scotland-wide.*

The Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government and local councils have accomplished much since devolution, but a major economic recession and the UK Government's decision to reduce the public deficit quickly by public sector budget cuts have created a formidable challenge.

The only way to ensure progress is not reversed is to break down professional, organisational and political boundaries we cannot afford to maintain. The challenge is to work *together* to build better childhoods despite worse budgets.

**The key to doing more with less is working in smarter ways for, and with, children and their families.**

## Children in Scotland's guiding principles for this Manifesto

- A good childhood for every child depends, first and foremost, on what happens in each child's family and community. Properly supporting them is the way to help all children thrive.
- What government does (or fails to do) can dramatically affect the lives and wellbeing of families and communities, as well as the life chances of children and young people.
- More equal societies with less child poverty benefit everyone and can be achieved by *progressive universalism*. This means making 'the basics' – from health promotion to lifelong education – accessible to every child, everywhere, with extra help for those who need it most.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should guide policy and practice. This means making Scots law as compatible with the UNCRC as possible; developing a shared Scottish understanding of what children's rights are; publicising the UNCRC to young people and their parents/carers; and expanding cross-sectoral children's rights training to everyone whose work touches young people's lives.
- Greater respect and support must be given to parents and carers – including mothers *and* fathers, *de facto* parents such as foster carers, and grandparents and other kinship carers. This includes better parental leave policies and practices; and seeing parent education as a way of preparing and supporting all parents and carers, not only those perceived to be failing.
- There are valuable lessons we can learn from other nations, especially our European neighbours, and adapt to Scottish realities: for example integrating services that surround children and their families, as happens in Norway.
- Children cannot vote, so it is up to adults to ensure they do not become the 'soft targets' bearing the brunt of budget cuts.

# Children in Scotland's MANIFESTO

**Children in Scotland is calling on all political parties and candidates to commit to:**

**1 Combine resources creatively by promoting integrated services and an integrated workforce**

Cutting services and closing facilities often ignores the hidden human and financial costs that offset 'savings'. It can also narrow opportunities to develop more effective and cost-efficient services by taking away a facility that could have been more imaginatively developed and used. For example, an under-enrolled school offers the chance to integrate activities such as out of school care, intergenerational programmes, family centres, youth groups and health services under one roof – bringing savings, providing a community with better services AND maintaining educational provision.

Smarter services mean adults working with children need the skills to lead and to work in a more integrated way. Long-standing problems like unequal pay, low status and inadequate professional development for those who work with younger children are getting in the way. A general qualification such as the Scottish pedagogue model will ensure workers with children and young people can work flexibly and professionally to support the level of integration that will deliver services effectively.

**2 Strengthen the Early Years Framework by making its implementation a statutory responsibility, funded through the Scottish Parliament's current tax powers**

Cutting budgets is not the only available

option: the Scottish Parliament has flexibility through its tax-raising powers. The Early Years Framework, which enjoys cross-party support and the backing of the Scottish Convention of Local Authorities, is being starved of the resources needed to deliver the 'transformational change' promised. Its implementation should be a priority and targets set that progressively extend coverage – given the proven benefits to older children who are educationally deprived – and increase children's visibility.

**3 Ensure universal availability of good quality, integrated, accessible childcare and early learning opportunities that are truly affordable**

Affordable access to good quality, integrated early childhood education and care as a *universal entitlement and a child's right*, supported through *sufficient tax-based funding*, will immediately benefit parents and carers, young children and the Scottish economy. Good quality early learning opportunities and high quality out of school services also underpin a longer term strategy to end child poverty, worklessness and dependency on benefits. Research shows fully integrated early childhood education and care services to be more cost effective and better at reaching disadvantaged groups.

**4 Ensure income comes back to Scotland from savings in UK budgets achieved through lower take-up of tax credits and benefits in Scotland as a result of increased or better services**

# Children in Scotland's MANIFESTO

Savings achieved from providing services which reduce take-up of benefits and tax credits – for example from extending preschool early education and childcare places and hours and school age childcare services – should be returned to Scotland to help fund these services. The necessary changes should be made to devolutionary arrangements as part of the implementation of the Calman report.

## **5 Maintain long-term cross-party policies that need sustained effort and stable funding**

Scotland already has sound aspirational policies and the right direction of travel (represented by the Early Years Framework, Curriculum for Excellence, Getting it Right for Every Child, the Additional Support for Learning Act and Equally Well). The pressing need is to implement these policies properly.

## **6 Continue frontline services that accomplish their goals efficiently**

These are needed more than ever. Services such as out of school care, specialist support for children affected by domestic abuse, and child and adolescent general health services already deliver good value for money and are a foundation for bigger, longer term improvements in the wellbeing of Scotland's children, young people and families. Delivering services in ways that are shown to be effective is central to smarter working.

## **7 Support innovative projects that accomplish work with children and families, and can be adapted and adopted widely**

Continuous improvement requires new ways of delivering key benefits. It would be

shortsighted and wasteful to stop groundbreaking innovations just getting under way around Scotland: for example, nature kindergartens and place-based education.

## **8 Invest in preventing problems, not fixing them later**

Preventing problems – especially those with their roots in prebirth and early childhood – is the best way to reduce suffering, promote wellbeing and save taxpayers' money. We can no longer afford to have preventable problems, for example foetal alcohol harm, ruining lives and requiring costly intervention further down the line.

## **9 Consult meaningfully with service users to set realistic expectations of what smarter services can and should deliver**

Inflated promises by candidates and government bodies followed by failure to deliver breeds cynicism and erodes trust in the public sector. Children, young people and families know when they are being patronised and resent not having a meaningful influence on important matters affecting their lives. Tokenistic, tick-box consulting activities achieve nothing.

## **10 Research actual outcomes from public spending on children and young people**

Greater accountability for *results*, not just intentions, structures and processes, is needed. Real evidence-based decision making that ensures the best return on spending can't happen in the absence of adequate evidence.

**More information about, and examples of, each recommendation are available from: [www.childreninScotland.org.uk/manifesto](http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/manifesto)**

# What happens NOW?

Children in Scotland is sharing this Manifesto with every political party, every candidate and every key person in the media, as well as our members.

**We want political parties and candidates to commit to these goals** and be guided by them in advancing their own agendas for the 2011 Scottish elections.

**We also encourage Children in Scotland's membership to press candidates to take these priorities seriously** – and act upon them, if elected.

We will seek responses and commitments from parties and candidates before the May 2011 election.

In the future, we will use this Manifesto to measure how well the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government are doing at keeping their promises to help children and implementing the recommendations we have shared with them.

***Visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk/manifesto](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/manifesto) for more information.***

**Children in Scotland** is the national independent agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. Our members include most of the 250,000 people in Scotland whose jobs involve working with, and caring for, children and young people. We improve awareness and understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Scotland's children and families; influence government policy and practice at all levels; and serve as a unifying force for better childhoods. To find out more about our work visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk).

Princes House  
5 Shandwick Place  
Edinburgh EH2 4RG  
Phone: (+44) 131 228 8484  
Fax: (+44) 131 228 8585  
Web: [www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk)

A company limited by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No. 83383  
Inland Revenue Charity No. SC003527 VAT No. 875 7960 5

978-1-901589-62-7