

Media Release

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Scottish Parliament ignores important EU guidance on Early Childhood Education and Care

Vital EU guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care appear to have been overlooked by the Scottish Parliament.

Concern emerged at the Scottish Children's Sector Forum, held as part of Children in Scotland's annual conference *Meeting of minds: Working together to build better lives for children*, that important EU guidance on Early Childhood Education and Care has not been seen by parliamentary committees that shape policy for children and families.

Neither the European and External Relations Committee nor the Education and Culture or Equal Opportunities Committees have been asked to scrutinise guidance including the EC's Communication of Early Childhood Education and Care, published in February, and guidelines on the social dimension of education and training, published in 2010.

The EU guidelines draw attention to the so-called Barcelona Targets of full time, good quality childcare for at least 90% of children aged between 3 and compulsory school age and at least 33% of children under 3, and urged Member States to use their Structural Funds to tackle this. Scotland, counted as part of the UK, has not met either of these targets. The guidelines also draw attention to the importance of fully integrated, universally accessible children's services in tackling poverty and reducing inequality – both key issues in Scotland.

Elsewhere in the conference Sue Bruce, Chief Executive of City of Edinburgh Council, told delegates that in challenging economic times we need to concentrate on how we use the 100% of funding available, rather than focus on the 25% that has gone, in making the most of resources to build better lives for children.

Danish family therapist Jesper Juul reminded delegates of the need to focus on who the child is, rather than on any problems they may be experiencing, to make sure the child remains at the heart of policy and practice.

Notes to Editors

1. *Meeting of minds: Working together to build better lives for children* was held by Children in Scotland in collaboration with City of Edinburgh Council.

2. Scotland's Children's Sector Forum brings together Children in Scotland's diverse national membership, including charities, local authorities, community groups, professional associations and individuals, to form a united voice influencing policy on behalf of children and their families.
3. **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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