

# Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

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In association with the Scottish Out of School Care Network

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Media Release

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### **Anticipating the cost Budget could spell hope – or heartache – for Scottish children and families**

As MSPs prepare to vote on the SNP government's £33bn spending plans in the Scottish Parliament today, Children in Scotland is urging all political parties to make meeting the needs of families a key priority, with accessible childcare and joined up children's services top of the list.

Following the November 2010 Spending Review agreement between the Scottish Government and COSLA to support the implementation of the Early Years Framework, the children's organisation hopes that today's final Budget negotiations don't leave parents in Scotland continuing to face the current triple whammy of higher childcare costs than the rest of Britain, falling numbers of preschool centres coinciding with a rising birth rate, and a reduction in the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, which was starkly highlighted in their newly-published survey of childcare costs.

Children in Scotland, in association with the Scottish Out of School Network's (SOSCEN) report *The costs of childcare in Scotland*, published yesterday, revealed that while the number of registered childcare centres and the number of centres providing preschool education has gone down by over 3% in the last three years, the number of children under 5 has risen by approximately 5%.

The figures highlight the problems surrounding implementation of the Framework, and point to the need for more resources and greater priority to be accorded to the support of services at a time when the birth rate is rising. They also make worrying news for parents, who are already dealing with other aspects of the economic downturn.

The report, which brings together information from service providers across Scotland and places the cost of childcare in the context of access to services, highlights inconsistencies with costs and charging structures across the country, with costs per week for 25 hours care ranging from £58 to £107 in private and local authority nurseries, and £80 to £110 for

childminders. Rural areas mostly offer cheaper prices, but fewer choices. Parents of children with disabilities have least choice of services, with 48% not offered a choice for their child. The figures are backed by recent findings from the Daycare Trust, which show Scottish childcare to be the most expensive in Britain.

Children in Scotland's chief executive Bronwen Cohen said: "With today's final Budget debate, it is vital that adequate provision is made for accessible and affordable childcare, and to address the unhelpful split that exists between the way childcare and early education are funded."

"Childcare costs and access issues contribute directly to the high levels of child poverty in Scotland, with nearly half of all children and young people living in poverty aged under 5. Affordable, strong early years provision that is accessible to all families is crucial not only in combating child poverty, but also for supporting parents, and encouraging economic recovery."

Irene Audain Chief Executive of The Scottish Out of School Care Network agrees: "It is essential both for children's wellbeing, and the national economy, that non-statutory childcare services are protected, so we are calling for the budget to include measures to sustain and protect these in Scotland."

"While some services, including some out of school care, are surviving on parental fees, others need subsidies to support children with disabilities, or those living in poor or rural areas. This leaves them extremely vulnerable to cuts in local government funding, which could lead to service closures, and parents without access to the childcare that is vital to them remaining part of the workforce."

Children in Scotland's Policy Development Manager Sarah Burton said: "The high costs of childcare in Scotland shown in our survey are a cause for concern, particularly in the current economic climate where children's services are vulnerable to cuts. Parents are facing a postcode lottery in costs and charging structures, with less access to tax credits and support. Access to services is likely to worsen as the population of under 5s rises."

#### **Notes to Editors**

1. *The costs of childcare in Scotland: a special report* brings together data from local authorities, a survey of private nurseries, and published and unpublished data from other organisations. The trends were consistent. It is available free to members of Children in Scotland, and priced at £25 otherwise.
2. Daycare Trust is a national UK childcare charity campaigning for quality affordable accessible childcare for all. Their survey, published this week, compares data on childcare costs regionally across the UK.
3. In 2009 the average cost of childcare for 25 hours was £75 in private nurseries and £85 with a childminder, indicating a rise above inflation of 0.7% and 2.6% respectively.
4. In Scotland children are entitled to preschool provision of 12.5 hours per week from the term following their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, paid for by the Scottish government and allocated by local authorities. Under 3s receive no statutory government funding. Depending on their birth date, some children receive six terms of preschool provision, some only four.
5. Scotland sits alongside Poland, France and Germany with entitlement beginning at 3 years old. In the Nordic countries and Slovenia entitlement generally begins following parental leave in Belgium at 2<sup>1/2</sup>.
6. From April the childcare element of Working Tax Credit will cover only 70% of childcare costs for low income working families rather than the current 80%.
7. **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](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk).

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