



Media Release

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New Minister sets out how to make life better for children and families

There is an early chance to hear new Minister for Children and Young People Angela Constance set the direction for children and family policy for the next 5 years at the Children in Europe conference on 6 June at New Lanark – the home of the world’s first fully integrated early childhood education and care service in the 19th century under Robert Owen.

The Minister will lead key international and Scottish speakers in considering how legislation could best advance the early years agenda; how early years services can be extended by making the most of European funding; working better with parents and communities; and developing new approaches to provision.

The conference comes as European guidelines link aspirations for children under 3 to early years education and care goals for the first time and reinforce findings that universally accessible, fully integrated services from birth supports families, boosts local economies and saves money.

Other speakers include Carol Kirk, Director of Education and Skills for North Ayrshire; Marta Korintus, Director of Research for the National Institute for Family and Social Policy in Hungary; Paivi Lindberg of the National Institute for Health and Wellbeing in Finland; and Jacque Fee of Learning and Teaching Scotland. The conference is chaired by Keir Bloomer, vice convener of Children in Scotland, and Larry Forde, Executive Director of Education Resources for South Lanarkshire.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, the UK publisher of *Europe’s youngest citizens: services and leave provision for under threes*, said:

“Early years needs to remain a priority for the new government, supported – as promised – by legislation to make sure Scotland does not fall further behind in the delivery of early years services. At the moment we fall well short of the kind of entitlements people have been talking about in Scotland for the last 10 years, which are a reality in many other European countries. This conference is the perfect opportunity to set out our plans for joining the dots and establishing the effective provision we need for our youngest children.”

Notes to Editors

1. *Improving services for 0–3s*, focusing on services and provision for all preschool children, is on 6 June 2011 at New Lanark World Heritage Site. It is run by Children in Europe and Children in Scotland.

2. On 20 May ministers from all EU member states agreed conclusions on early childhood education and care that will encourage integrated approaches to education and care from birth, universal access to services and the sharing of good practice between states across Europe. This followed the publication in February of the EC's first Communication on early childhood education and care.
3. **Children in Europe** is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0 to 10 and those interested in children's issues. It is published simultaneously in 15 languages and 18 countries across Europe. It provides a forum for ideas, practice and information and to contribute to the development of policy and practice at European and national levels. It is published in the UK by Children in Scotland. Children in Europe Issue 20, ***Europe's youngest citizens: services and leave provision for under threes***, edited by Marta Korintus, Director of Research for the National Institute for Family and Social Policy in Hungary, was published on 21 March. For more information visit www.childrenineurope.org.
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.

To order a copy of Children in Europe magazine ***Europe's youngest citizens: services and leave provision for under threes*** telephone 0131 222 2400 or visit www.childreninScotland.org.uk/publications

For further information contact Tracey Francis
Email tfrancis@childreninScotland.org.uk / tel 0131 222 2419