

Media statement – 14 December 2011

Children in Scotland welcomes new report on social and economic merit of universal childcare

Children in Scotland welcomes today's publication of the Institute for Public Policy Research's (IPPR) report *Making the Case for Universal Childcare*.

Children in Scotland has long advocated the benefits of universal entitlement to high quality, flexible, subsidised childcare, which is also the message of the European Commission's recent Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), based on extensive European research and signed up to by the UK minister for children.

Today's IPPR report makes it clear that investing in the infrastructure of childcare, improving the quality of staff, provision, and enabling women in particular to enter the labour market, would bring economic benefits to families and be cost-effective for the government in terms of tax receipts. We agree that investing in the employment of high-quality staff in childcare would be an investment in the economic infrastructure of the UK, and urge the government in Scotland to take heed of this report.

The issue for Scotland is that the income generated and calculated by the IPPR is in terms of tax receipts which go to Westminster. For Scotland to reap these economic benefits the UK Treasury should return a proportion of this increased income to a devolved Scotland.

The report is right to stress the links between universally available childcare and changes in parental leave to enable fathers to be able to choose to take care of their baby in its early years, and the importance of more flexible working patterns to improve families' ability to manage work and personal commitments.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, who first examined this topic for the IPPR in a report published in 1991, said: "We welcome this report, which makes clear it that the benefits from ECEC are immediate and not just long-term. A first step in Scotland would be the Children's Services Bill promised by the Scottish Government, establishing a universal entitlement to ECEC, facilitated in the first instance by a charging policy similar to that

operating in our Nordic neighbours, which does not distinguish between education and care.”

“This would create both long- and short-term savings, and strengthen Scotland’s economy and workforce.”

Notes to Editors

1. 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.
2. The most recent publications relating to early childhood education and care, and its economic benefits, published by Children in Scotland include:
 - Early Years Briefing Paper 3: Early Childhood Education and Care (June 2011)
 - Special report 2: Early Childhood Education and Care: Developing a fully integrated early years system (September 2011)
 - The cost of childcare in Scotland: a special report (February 2011).

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