



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed: 3.11.06

Scotland best placed to ‘detox’ childhood

Scotland is better placed than England to ‘detox childhood’, according to childhood expert Sue Palmer.

Speaking at Children in Scotland’s annual conference today (3rd November), Sue Palmer, author of the controversial book *Toxic Childhood*, will say Scotland is less bogged down than England in terms of bureaucracy, which makes it easier to implement the policy changes necessary to improve childhood experience.

She also believes there is a stronger sense of national culture in Scotland, which provides a more solid base for making the “grassroots” changes necessary within communities.

She says: “Childhood has gone horribly wrong and we must get it right. There are two ways to approach this. Policy change is important – Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence is a very good start and there is great potential here for taking a holistic approach to children’s welfare. However, the real change has to come from the grassroots – from changing the attitudes of parents, the public and whole communities.”

The conference, *A Gift for Life? Building better childhoods for Scotland’s children*, held today at the Westerwood Hotel in Cumbernauld, addresses the importance of viewing childhood as a whole, discussing ways in which it could be improved and identifying policy priorities for the next Scottish parliament.

The conference will raise questions about whether the current targeted view of childhood reflects a ‘rationing’ approach, instead of one geared towards supporting every childhood.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said: “We want an approach that recognises the full range of factors influencing children today, and a reassessment of where money is spent across childhood. Resources allocated to young children have been shown to represent more cost effective investment.”

The conference will also feature the launch of a discussion paper on a coordinated European approach to children’s services. *Towards a European Approach for Services for Young Children* considers how the UK could protect services for children by adopting a coordinated European approach.

Other highlights include an overview of childhood studies from Allison James, professor of sociology at the University of Sheffield; and Laurie O'Donnell, of Learning and Teaching Scotland, on the importance of citizenship for children.

The conference is being held in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council, whose work in redeveloping the curriculum in their schools and improving the aspirations of school children reflects many of the issues being discussed.

Winners of a children's art competition will be presented with prizes by conference chair Brian Taylor on Friday morning. Children living in North Lanarkshire aged up to 11 were asked to send in work on the theme 'What makes me happy?'

Notes for editors:

- Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provisions are of the best possible quality and able to meet the needs of a diverse society.

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