



PRESS RELEASE  
1 December 2004

### **Scotland needs its own childcare strategy**

Children in Scotland, the national agency for all those working for children and their families, is calling on the Scottish Executive to develop a coherent strategy that will ensure integrated, affordable, flexible and high-quality services for children that combine education and care.

Tomorrow (Thursday), the Treasury will publish a ten-year strategy that will work towards the provision of universal childcare in England and Wales.

In a speech to the Daycare Trust last month, Prime Minister Tony Blair said the reform would be based on choice and flexibility, support for parents and equality of opportunity – recognising that “good quality early years education and care is the key to unlocking the cycle of poverty and reducing inequalities in educational achievement”.

In Scotland, every three and four-year-old is already entitled to a free part-time nursery place.

The Integrated Community Schools model, which was considered an example of good practice when ministers in Westminster were drawing up their plans for Extended Schools, rethinks the role of the school and its potential as a universal service, offering an integrated approach to education, health and family support. It is improving links between nurseries and schools and expanding out-of-school care. The Scottish Executive’s Integrated Early Years Strategy, due to be published soon, also focuses on joining up all services for the very youngest children and meeting their needs in a holistic way.

And the Scottish Executive’s Early Years Workforce Review is looking at how to improve the skills, qualifications and capacity of the children’s workforce.

However, Scotland lacks a long-term, clear and coherent strategy that will draw all of these strands together, setting out the milestones needed to achieve integrated, universal services for children.

Bronwen Cohen, Chief Executive of Children in Scotland, said: “The commitment to provide free part-time pre-school education for all three and four-year-olds provided a concrete target which has been delivered with a positive impact on the lives of young children and their families in Scotland.”

“The Scottish Executive must now present a clear vision of what is being aspired to with a strategy which builds upon existing services and policies, and works towards achieving universal services for children that integrate care and learning.

“The most logical first step would be to extend the current part-time nursery provision to full-time.”

*For further information, contact Nicola Pay, Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, tel: 0131 222 2419, email: npay@childreninscotland.org.uk.*

### **Notes for editors**

1. 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.