



PRESS RELEASE
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Children in Scotland disappointed by the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee report into early years education.

Commenting on the publication today of the Education Committee's Early Years report, Children in Scotland has welcomed the call for a 10 year strategy encompassing childcare and education and their call for an 'upskilling' of the workforce but is disappointed by the Committee's limited aspirations for young children in Scotland and its failure to support comprehensive and universal pre-school services.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland said:

"Currently our youngest and most vulnerable children are cared for by the least well qualified and poorly paid staff. We are disappointed that the Parliament's call for upgrading staff qualifications is limited in its scope and restricted in the first instance to the most disadvantaged areas. Children in Scotland would have liked a more aspirational approach – emphasising the need for clear and ambitious goals with the 10 year strategy. If we do not aim higher we will never reach the kind of services available as a matter of entitlement to all pre-school children in countries such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

"The Parliament's vision for the early years' sector continues to refer separately to 'childcare' and 'education' services – referring for example to childcare being 'articulated' with other entitlements such as part time pre-school educational services for three and four year olds. Children and parents need services in which concepts of education, care, play - and healthy lifestyles - are regarded as indivisible.

"Partly as a result of these conceptual divisions Scotland has one of the most fragmented structures of pre-school services in Europe which means that, as one Scottish parent told us:

'As a mother of two young children working part-time, I find my options getting more limited and more complicated as my children get older. My three-year-old son cannot use his (public) local school nursery because he can only attend for five mornings or afternoons and would then need to go to another service. So I use a private nursery for him – with some free sessions. But I have to use a different private nursery for my younger son (aged 13 months) because my older son's nursery does not take children under two and my younger son's nursery does not provide funded places because of the paperwork involved. Maybe I should give up work?'

(From the forthcoming **Children in Europe** magazine)*

"Scotland's young children need and deserve a simpler structure of properly funded and well-staffed services which promote greater continuity in their lives over the day, the week and the pre-school period. Whilst emphasising the need for greater

investment in this vision, it was disappointing that the Committee did not also emphasise the need for a simpler structure of services.”

ENDS

Notes for editors:

Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisation 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 provision are of the best possible quality and able to meet the demands of a diverse society. For further information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk

Children in Europe is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0-10 and those interested in children's issues. It is published simultaneously in eight languages by a network of national magazines. It aims to provide a forum for ideas, practice and information and contribute to the development of policy and practice at European and national levels. It is published in the UK by Children in Scotland, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. For further information visit www.childrenineurope.org.uk

*The forthcoming issue of **Children in Europe** is due out in July and focuses on the 'mixed economy' of public, private and voluntary services available in the early years.

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