



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 20 June 2007**

Supply subsidy approach 'key to Smarter Scotland for children'

Children in Scotland welcomes the SNP's move to a supply subsidy rather than demand approach to the early years \*, as signalled by plans to be announced during today's debate on a 'Smarter Scotland'.

Following the SNP's pledge to reduce primary class sizes and the announcement that every three and four year old will be entitled to an extra five weeks free nursery education in Scotland, Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said:

"We welcome the SNP's move to a supply-side approach to developing early years services."

"We believe it is vital to get more money into the early years and that this is what has enabled Nordic countries to build extremely high quality services with well qualified staff."

Children in Scotland's manifesto called for entitlement to integrated whole-day services for three and four year olds by 2009, free to low income parents and with progressively reduced costs to all parents, and that by 2011 entitlement be extended to all two-year-olds. Bronwen Cohen added: "The SNP should consider again the report published late last year by the OECD on early childhood education and care, Starting Strong II, which found that most western countries need to double the amount invested in young children. The report said a priority is that our services, which are currently highly fragmented and very expensive for parents, should be brought together."

"We need to have a structure of services that allows us to innovate. The Nordic model includes a strong element of 'nature through nurture' – for example, through nature kindergartens – that results in good health, creativity, and confidence, from which every child in Scotland could and should benefit."

"The resources issue will be crucial, but the benefits will be enormous – and the key to developing a truly 'Smarter Scotland'."

Paula Evans, policy and parliamentary information officer at Children in Scotland, said:

"Scotland must aspire to increased provision for the benefit of parents and children. Specifically, Children in Scotland supports the development of a timetabled move towards a universal and entitlement-based service to mirror provisions made in Nordic countries. We also encourage learning from and then adapting the Nordic experience to create a Scottish Pedagogue model for early years professionals."

For more information, contact Chris Small – email [csmall@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:csmall@childreninscotland.org.uk) / tel 0131 222 2419

**Notes for editors:**

\* Children in Scotland is calling on the government to invest in high quality early education and childcare services by:

- Investing more in supply-side funding and eventually phasing out the

reliance on tax credits to pay for childcare costs

- Ensuring that local authorities have adequate funding to develop services which meet the needs of all families
- Addressing the concerns raised by the recent OECD Starting Strong II report over the failure to integrate education and childcare – conceptually and in practice – in the UK

- For more information on the OECD Starting Strong II report, see [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)

- Children in Scotland is Scotland's national children's agency, bringing together voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals to improve the lives of Scotland's children and their families.