

CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND

MEDIA RELEASE 2/11/07

'EMBED SELF-ESTEEM AT START OF CHILDHOOD' TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND LEARNING

Embedding self-esteem and empathy at the earliest age is key to the future health, happiness and success of adults, Professor Lord Robert Winston has told Children in Scotland's annual conference.

Lord Winston was one of the keynote speakers at the conference, Healthy, happy and wise: working together for the wellbeing of Scotland's children, held on 1 and 2 November at the MacDonald Cardrona Hotel, Peebles.

"There is no doubt that children who lack self-esteem end up worse off," Lord Winston said. "Rewarding children for trying hard and attempting to do things is signally important. Children who aren't rewarded end up lacking self-esteem as adults – and lack of self-esteem can start from the very beginning of childhood."

Lord Winston also discussed approaches to learning and attitudes towards teachers.

"Teaching children how to learn, rather than focusing on what they learn, should be the priority in education," professor Winston said.

"For children, an inspirational teacher is like gold. But there is a real failure to recognise the need to value teachers. How can teachers be inspirational when they don't feel regarded?"

Fiona Hyslop, MSP, cabinet secretary for education and lifelong learning, also spoke at the conference and reiterated the Scottish Government's pledge to cut class sizes.

"We will deliver on our manifesto promise to cut class sizes to 18," she said. "We will be driving smaller class sizes down year on year."

Hyslop said that the current position on child wellbeing in Scotland, as highlighted in the recent Unicef report card 7: An Overview of child wellbeing in rich countries (published February 2007), "must change".

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, co-author of the Unicef report, discussed its findings and recommendations for ways to improve wellbeing in the UK.

“The UK’s position is dire,” professor Bradshaw said. “The UK government’s strategy on child wellbeing is right ... but there is still a tendency to blame the poor, and anti-social behaviour, rather than recognise that rising inequalities are the key problem.”

Higher taxation was the only route to improving wellbeing for children in the UK, professor Bradshaw concluded.

At the end of the conference, Glenn Rodger, director of education and lifelong learning at Scottish Borders Council, said: “From the Scottish Borders’ perspective, we’ve found our involvement in this conference to be extremely valuable. As well as being able to use it as a key learning environment for our staff it’s given us a chance to showcase a lot of the things we’re most proud of in terms of integrated services.”

Healthy, happy and wise: working together for the wellbeing of Scotland’s children, was held on 1 and 2 November, at the MacDonald Cardrona Hotel, Peebles.

For more information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk/hhw

Contact: Chris Small

Email: csmall@childreninscotland.org.uk

Tel: 0131 222 2419 / 07986 589 514

Notes for editors:

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.