



PRESS RELEASE
Embargoed, Monday 13 June

Re-imagining the children's workforce

***NOTE: This seminar will be aired at www.holyrood.tv from 10am
Any media wishing to attend the day should contact the Scottish Parliament's
Media Office in advance to arrange accreditation***

A full programme is attached

An estimated 150,000 people now work in children's services in Scotland and the number is continuing to rise. But is the workforce sustainable in its current form? And if not, what changes do we need to bring about to ensure that it is?

These are key questions that will be addressed today (Monday, 13 June) by some of Scotland's leading professionals in children's services, as they look to the future and "re-imagine" the education, roles and relationships of those who work in the field.

This major one-day seminar ***Working for the Future: re-imagining the children's sector workforce*** has been organised by Children in Scotland, the International Futures Forum and the Scottish Council Foundation on behalf of the Scottish Parliament's Future's Forum. It will take place in the Chamber, of the Scottish Parliament.

The seminar will hear from researchers from Hungary and Sweden as well as leading practitioners and policy experts from around the UK and encourage lively debate about the challenges confronting the sector and their implications for policy and practice.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said: "There is a real need to review the future requirements of the children's sector workforce across the full range of services which includes childcare, education, health and social work as well as more informal arts and play activities. At the moment they are being reviewed separately, which seems out of step with the emphasis the Scottish Executive is placing on joined-up and outcomes focused policies.

"We know, for example, that improving the health of Scotland's children requires more than input from the health sector alone. Informal outdoor activities as well as pre-school services and schools can contribute more to this. We also know that if a child is to do well at school, he or she must be both physically and mentally healthy, and may also require input from social work.

"New kinds of professionals are already emerging in other European countries. For example, in Sweden there is now a new kind of teacher qualified to work with children and young people aged between 0 and 19 in both formal and less formal settings. All trainees, whether they want to work with 15-month-olds or 15-year-olds, have the same common core training lasting 18 months. Denmark has also radically reformed its workforce. The initial core training for three different occupations has been integrated into one. The profession, called the 'pedagogue', is qualified to work across a wide range of services for children, including those from birth to the age of six, as well as young people and adults. Learning, care and upbringing are closely-related activities in their day-to-day work, not separate fields that need to be joined up. One possibility for Scotland, could be a common pedagogical element in basic education across all the core professions."

Jim McCormick, Scottish Council Foundation, said: "There is a lack of diversity in the current children's workforce that makes it vulnerable.

"Women account for 95 per cent of nursery nurses, playgroup leaders and childcare workers who also tend to be on relatively low pay and who have few opportunities for significant career development. This is not sustainable in the long term because while demand for services for young children is growing, the number of women with low educational qualifications is falling. There is a strong need to improve the professionalism of these jobs so they will be acceptable to people with higher educational qualifications.

"Scotland will benefit from looking outwards to learn how other small nations are managing to enhance the skills and standing of these professions."

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.