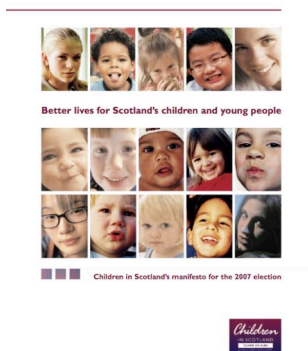




PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed: Wednesday 28 June 2006

Children's organisation calls for results, not rhetoric



Children in Scotland will set out its vision for the future of Scotland's children and young people at a special event to be held on 28th June at the Scottish Parliament.

In preparation for the 2007 Scottish Elections, Children in Scotland is launching its manifesto, *Better lives for Scotland's children and young people*. Amongst other recommendations, the manifesto calls for child health to be made a national priority, focussing specifically on obesity, mental and sexual health and an entitlement to free, nutritious school meals for all primary and pre-school children.

Over 400 voluntary, professional and statutory organisations working with children and young people across Scotland were consulted to produce an ambitious, wide-ranging manifesto designed to inform and influence party political policy discussions.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said:

“We want to see Scotland not only catch up where we are behind but also begin to lead the way in innovative and bold policies. Now is the time for Scotland's politicians to sign up to our vision of better lives for Scotland's children and young people.”

Children in Scotland is calling for Scotland's political parties to prioritise the young with a list of challenging but achievable goals. Within eight overarching themes, Children in Scotland is specifically calling for:

- ⇒ Child health to be made a national priority, focussing specifically on obesity, mental and sexual health
- ⇒ The entitlement to free, nutritious school meals to be extended to all primary school children and to all three and four-year olds attending pre-school services
- ⇒ A comprehensive strategy to tackle the problem of young people not in education, employment or training combined with the removal of the "benefits trap" facing 16-17 year olds
- ⇒ An innovative ten-year early years strategy for Scotland
- ⇒ 50% of all staff working in early years services to be qualified to degree or equivalent level
- ⇒ A fully implemented Parenting Strategy for Scotland supporting families at key stages in the lives of children and young people
- ⇒ A comprehensive action plan to tackle severe and persistent child poverty, complemented by a commitment to eradicate fuel poverty
- ⇒ A play policy for Scotland that recognises the value of indoor and outdoor play spaces for children

Jonathan Sher, head of policy and research at Children in Scotland, said:

"We have had a devolved Scotland for seven years now and while the Scottish Parliament and Executive has achieved a lot for children and young people we expect more in its third term."

"Children and young people deserve a better future. But we should remember that we are relying on our children and young people to also provide a better future for Scotland. Policy makers need to be bold and determined if Scotland's young are to have the skills and support necessary to meet this challenge."

Lord Reed, Convener of Children in Scotland, added:

"We need to prioritise and listen to the needs of children, young people and their families if we are to make meaningful and lasting changes in Scotland. Children in Scotland's manifesto makes an excellent start, but it needs the support of Scotland's politicians."

The launch of Children in Scotland's manifesto *Better lives for Scotland's children and young people* takes place at Committee Room 1 of the Scottish Parliament, on Wednesday 28 June, from 6-7pm. Refreshments will be served. For an invitation to the launch or more information, please contact Chris Small on csmall@childreninScotland.org.uk / tel: 0131 222 2419.

The manifesto will be supported by detailed briefings, available on request.

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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.