



**early years**  
the organisation for young children

# Urgent Call for Investment in Young Children



**Early Years – the organisation for young children is the largest organisation in Northern Ireland for young children. We are a non-profit making organisation and have been working since 1965 to promote high quality childcare and pre-school education for children aged 0-12 and their families.**

The voluntary and independent members of Early Years support the needs of almost 28,000 children, representing an estimated 11,000 families in Northern Ireland. In employing over 5,200 staff directly, the sector also makes an important social and financial contribution by generating almost £44 million in salaries with a further £14 million spent in the wider economy on overheads, annual running costs and capital investment programmes.

Early Years believes that major investment in our young children is critical to ensure the educational, social, emotional and cognitive development of our future generations. Nobel Laureate and Economist James J. Heckman, analysed the investments made in early childhood programmes and learned that, at the same cost, there are far greater gains to be had by investing when children are younger.

**These are some of the key issues for the care and education of young children in Northern Ireland. Please make your local MLA candidates aware of them and encourage them to press for action.**

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**Call** Increase / realign the percentage of the Education budget spent on young children pre-primary education

**We Need** An Early Education and Care Act for Northern Ireland that would provide a legislative basis for the financing, supervision and coordination of all education and care services for young children

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**Call** Commit to the development of an integrated strategy for all children 0-6 but clearly articulate how education and care services for children 0-3 will be enhanced and developed

**We Need** Roll out of the programme for two year olds incrementally across Northern Ireland allowing Statutory Nurseries, Private Day Care, Sure Start services, community based playgroups and child minders to deliver the programme

Parents to be allowed to pay for wrap around child care

A training, qualifications and professional development strategy for the entire workforce working with this age group recognising the experience many staff will bring with them

A 0-6 strategy aligned with other key policies and strategies such as the need for enhanced parental leave entitlement; the relationship with the Child Care; Play and Leisure; and the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategies

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**Call** Deal with as a pressing issue and outline in a clear manner how services for children aged 3+ can be delivered in an equitable and accessible fashion

**We Need** A single funding formula for this age group

Equitable provision for children with SEN

Parents to be allowed to pay for wrap around child care in funded pre school provision

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**Contact Early Years on: (028) 9066 2825  
or visit [www.early-years.org](http://www.early-years.org)**