

## **Children's charities seek commitment from MPs to help the most vulnerable children and their families across the UK**

As the UK awaits the emergency budget, three charities are calling on the Government to spend on future generations now to save later. At a parliamentary event on Wednesday June 16<sup>th</sup>, Action for Children, Family Action and Children England will call on MPs to join their campaign for the Government to put the smart money on services for vulnerable families and children. If they don't get the vital services they need now it could end up costing the treasury more in the long term.

Today there are around one million children who are at risk of intergenerational deprivation and neglect (1). More must be done if future generations are to be prevented from becoming trapped in this cycle tomorrow. **'The Smart Money'** event will demonstrate that by investing wisely these cycles can be broken, giving the most vulnerable in society a fair chance in life.

By working with families at the earliest possible stage, problems such as mental health, poor parenting and drug abuse can be successfully tackled before they spiral out of control. Recent research by Action for Children and the new economics foundation laid out not only the social but economic benefits of this type of intervention. For example, by focussing on early intervention services the economy could save £486 billion over 20 years. The charities are not asking for more money, just a different way of investing to benefit future generations.

The three charities together represent many hundreds of local schemes working with vulnerable children and their families everyday. From experience they know the social and economic benefits that early intervention can deliver. An independent evaluation of three projects run by Action for Children shows projects saved between £4 and £9 for every £1 invested in them.(2) Family Action's Building Bridges services for families where one parent has a mental health problem costs up to £5k per year compared with over £25k for foster care if a parent is sectioned; it reduces the number of parents with clinically significant relationship problems by almost half as well as reducing the number of children on child protection registers.(3) Children England's member organisations employ a total of nearly 40,000 staff and volunteers, delivering direct impacts on the life chances of children across the country.

**'The Smart Money'** event will be used as an opportunity to highlight the importance of early intervention to MPs and encourage them to become advocates of this approach through a series of measures. These include writing to the chancellor to ask how the Treasury intends to deliver

efficiency to the economy, challenging their local authority to find out how vulnerable families are being helped in their constituency and holding a child-centred surgery day.

Helen Dent CBE, Chief Executive of Family Action, said, “The emergency budget must not slam the door shut on investment in the most vulnerable families and children. So many problems experienced by our society – domestic violence, poor parenting and child neglect, relationship breakdown - start in the family home and will only be addressed if professional services are properly funded to work with parents and children in their home environment. Invest in this and all families can become building blocks for our society; neglect it and the foundations of that society are at risk.”

Dame Clare Tickell, Chief Executive of Action for Children, says: “Early intervention services are a lifeline to the most vulnerable children and their families, without them they’d never escape the cycles of deprivation and neglect that many sadly get caught up in. MPs from all parties must come along and recognise the importance of these services and the real difference they can make to people’s lives. Their support is vital if the people they have been chosen to represent are to get the help they so badly need.”

Maggie Jones Chief Executive of Children England said, “All across England voluntary groups of all kinds are providing vital “*stitch in time*” services for children, young people and their families. They are the glue that holds many families and communities together when times get tough. If we fail them now, we will all be the poorer.”

The event is being hosted by Kate Green MP at Portcullis House Westminster. The keynote speech will be given by Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families. Other figures from the children’s sector will be present, along with children and families who use early intervention services and the staff who support them.

## **Ends**

## **End notes**

(1) Estimate based on Oroyemi P, Damioli G, Barnes M and Crosier T (2009). *Understanding the risks of social exclusion across the life course: Families with Children*. Nat Cen/Cabinet Office. 4-7 percent of children are caught up in ‘long-term multiple disadvantage’. These families are more likely than others to have four or more children.

(2) Taking into account increased tax revenue through employment, decreased benefits, reduced health costs of children, reduced crime and anti-social behaviour and reduction of costs and care

(3) 53% of parents had clinically significant problems in their relationships when referred to Family Action (with 3% showing severe problems) while at close of work this had fallen to 31% (percentage with severe problems remained the same) – Morris: Building Bridges Evaluation (2007)

## **Notes to Editors**

**'The Smart Money – Making Tomorrow Better for Children and Families' takes place on June 16<sup>th</sup> from 12-2pm in the Attlee Suite at Portcullis House, Westminster**

**Press contact for the event is Maddy Ryle at Family Action. Call 0207 241 7632 / 07940 978 771 or email [maddy.ryle@family-action.org.uk](mailto:maddy.ryle@family-action.org.uk)**

**Please see the accompanying document for case studies and further statistics. Staff, policy experts, CEOs and service users are available for interview on request.**

**Action for Children** is one of the UK's largest children's charities working with over 156,000 children, young people and their families at around 420 projects across the UK. Previously known as NCH, Action for Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable children and young people break through injustice, deprivation and inequality so they can achieve their full potential. For further information visit [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

**Family Action** has been a leading provider of services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families since its foundation in 1869. We work with over 45,000 families a year by providing practical, emotional and financial support through over 100 services based in communities across England. A further 150,000 people benefit from our educational grants and information service. We tackle some of the most complex and difficult issues facing families today – including domestic abuse, mental health problems, learning disabilities and severe financial hardship.

**Children England** is the leading membership body for the children, young people and families voluntary sector in England. Our mission is to create a fairer world for children, young people and families by championing the voluntary organisations that work on their behalf. We represent charities of all sizes but particularly support small, local charities, providing them with the help they need to thrive and to support children well.