

Press Release: Embargoed for Monday 17 March at noon.

4CHILDREN LAUNCHES FIRST EVIDENCE AND MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK TO DEMONSTRATE THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES

4Children, the national charity for children and families is today launching a new evidence and measurement framework for children's centres to demonstrate outcomes for children and families. The framework builds on research commissioned by 4Children from Professor Michael Marmot of University College London (UCL) and its report *An Equal Start* which set out the most important outcomes Children's Centres should be striving for in order to give all children positive early-years experiences, including on children's health and development and parent-child relationships. The framework is a new national evidence tool and will be vital in supporting children's centres to maximise their potential and to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Measuring What Matters: A guide for Children's Centres has been carried out at a time when Children's Centres are increasingly asked to demonstrate their value to their local communities about positive outcomes they are achieving for children and families. However decreasing resources in many areas of the country are increasing the challenge of achieving this. The starting point for Professor Marmot's work was to recognise the gaps within existing assessments and set a clear definition and criteria for measurement based on the core purpose of Centres, as well as recognising on-going changes in working practices. The work underpins 4Children's own efforts to continually improve and achieve the best possible outcomes in its own service delivery.

Anne Longfield OBE, Chief Executive of 4Children said; *"We will be drawing on the findings of this independent academic study to help us to continually improve practice within our own centres and ensure they remain continually focused on achieving the best outcomes for the families we serve. I hope that these measures will also serve as a useful tool to others in evaluating their own assessment frameworks and, more broadly, to help to improve understanding around the defined and central role that Children's Centres play in supporting families across a wide range of areas.*

"Most people working in the sector know first-hand the enormous contribution that Children's Centres make towards supporting vulnerable children, improving social mobility and strengthening families. However, with the undercurrent of threats from local funding pressures, it's more important than ever for all Children's Centre providers are able to demonstrate clear evidence based case for continued family support based on the impact they make."

Dr Angela Donkin, from the UCL Institute of Health Equity said; *"This report sets out the best measures available for monitoring progress on important aspects of children's development, parenting and the environment in which they live. If local areas, and the services within them, utilise*

the same reliable measurement standards this will drive forward improvements in children's outcomes and build the evidence base on what works. However this will be of little value if only a few children benefit. We encourage local areas to continue to invest in effective early years services and children's centres that are accessible to all".

The report highlights how Children's Centres work with a range of partners to improve outcomes and challenges centres to utilise data from a wide range of sources in order to achieve and measure essential outcomes most effectively using a whole-system approach.

Headline areas of focus within the framework are effective outreach; children developing well and positive parenting. Within these areas, specific measures of success include:

- Children developing age appropriate skills in drawing and copying
- Children developing age appropriate play, self management and self control
- Fewer children born with low birth weight
- Fewer children with high or low body mass index
- Fewer women exposed to tobacco smoke during pregnancy
- More mothers who breastfeed
- More parents regularly talking to their child using a wide range of words and sentence structures, including songs, poems and rhymes
- More parents with good mental wellbeing
- More parents increasing their knowledge and application of good parenting.
- More parents accessing good work or developing the skills needed for employment, particularly those furthest away from the labour market

The research is being launched on Monday 17 March at a lunchtime event held in Westminster Central Hall.

- Ends -

For further information or to request a place at the event, please contact Zara Bishop at Zara.Bishop@4Children.org.uk 0207 522 6986 or Julie.Evans@4Children.org.uk / 020 7522 6928 or 0791 787 0641.

4Children is the national charity all about children and families. We have spearheaded a joined-up, integrated approach to children's services and work with a wide range of partners around the country to ensure children and families have access to the services and support they need in their communities. We run Sure Start Children's Centres as well as family and youth services across Britain. www.4Children.org.uk.