



**Save Childhood
Movement**

Manifesto for the Early Years
Putting children first



Putting Children First

an integrated, holistic and
appropriately financed
system built upon

an evidence-based understanding
of the child

as a citizen with developmental
rights and freedoms

March 2014

Save Childhood Movement

Core Messages

We need to look more urgently at what underpins child wellbeing and the kind of values that we wish to see reflected in wider society

Children in England have natural developmental rights and freedoms that need to be protected

Care, nurture and learning should be seen as one coherent whole



Childhood in a changing World

Erosion of family and community life
Rapid expansion of screen technology
Less physical activity
Less risk-taking
Less freedom
Less trust
Less access to nature
Pressures of commercialisation and sexualisation
Pressures of the digital world
Pressures of the schooling system



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Child wellbeing in the UK

one in ten children has a diagnosed mental health disorder

one in three is clinically obese

one in twelve adolescents deliberately self-harms

nearly 80,000 children and young people currently suffer
from severe depression

including 8,000 children aged under 10 years old



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Our key concerns

1. Politicians, policymakers and the key inspectorate are all currently demonstrating a worrying lack of understanding about child development and a deeply concerning neglect and dismissal of expert opinion and evidence
2. All parties are now focusing on the economic benefits of affordable childcare but without the appropriate concern about the quality of provision and impact on child and family wellbeing.
3. There is a lack of focus on integrated provision and services targeted to local need
4. There is a lack of funding to ensure quality training and an appropriately valued and remunerated workforce.
5. Parental choice is being neglected and undermined

What we would like to see in the future

- Evidence-based policymaking fully supported by the sector
- Much greater focus on the importance of nurture
- High quality provision that is responsive to the needs of local communities
- A valued and appropriately remunerated workforce
- Greatly improved parental support
- A reversal of the funding curve to prioritise the early years
- Policymaking that is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Putting Children First - Eleven Policy Points

The development of a fully integrated system that should:

- 1** respect and support the rights and freedoms of children to be provided with environments that allow them to develop all their natural dispositions and capacities to the fullest potential. This must include regular and open access to the natural world
- 2** re-instate the importance of early relationships and better support the health and wellbeing of parents and families
- 3** address inequalities and ensure that every child can develop to his or her full potential
- 4** ensure that the values we are modelling for children are those that we want to see in a 21st century world
- 5** ensure that developmentally appropriate play-based care and education governs children's experiences until at least age 6

Putting Children First - Eleven Policy Points

- 6** be evidence-led and have the best interests of the child at its heart. This should not be a 'one-size-fits-all' solution but should be responsive to the diversity of parental and local community needs
- 7** reverse the existing funding curve so that we prioritise the vital importance of the early years
- 8** underpin all ECEC services and provision with the latest scientific evidence and global examples of best practice
- 9** review, consolidate and evaluate all policies and evidence through a new National Council on the Science of Human Learning and Development
- 10** provide formative assessment and screening of children's development from birth and ensure that we are measuring what matters for children's long-term health and wellbeing
- 11** ensure that the adults working with young children are highly trained, emotionally mature and appropriately valued and remunerated

Ten structural dimensions

The ten structural dimensions of the manifesto should be understood as comprising a broad, holistic concept concerned with all aspects of child well-being and development

understanding the child
equality of opportunity
cultural values
families and communities
infrastructure
the science of early learning and development
planning and policy
research and data
financing
human resources

We're interested in children's learning journeys and what nurtures and maintains each child's innate curiosity, creativity and love of learning

And also in the journeys of parents and what best supports their own health and wellbeing as the most important adults in their children's lives

Children and families are embedded in communities so the health and wellbeing of local communities matters too



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Child and Family Wellbeing

Physical Health

physical activity and nutrition

Mental Health

intellectual stimulation, purpose and meaning-making

Emotional Health

positive values and relationships

Spiritual Health

belonging and contribution

Children learn from the environment
- which includes the adults in their worlds-



Adults can consciously change their environments
Young children must live in the worlds that adults have created

Children learn from the environment

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It is vital to provide environments for children that are underpinned by the most up-to-date understanding of human flourishing, that are characterised by global best practice and pedagogy and where care, nurturing and learning form one coherent whole

*Save Childhood Movement
Putting Children First, 2014*

Care, nurturing and learning

Putting Children First



Manifesto for the Early Years

Putting Children First

March 2014

online copies available from

<http://www.savechildhood.net/putting-children-first.html>

www.savechildhood.net

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“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children”.

Nelson Mandela

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