

Backing the Future: why investing in children is good for us all

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Well-being is about friends, also being healthy, independent and having a job, feeling safe and secure. We live in a very unequal society where some people have a lot, and too many people have too little. More well-being brings benefits to us as individuals and to society as a whole.

Young Person's Reference Group 2009

The Happiness Counts Project

Imagine an overflowing bath, what do you do? Do you start mopping up or do you turn off the tap?

How do we move from the current paradigm?
Despite some investment in prevention we continue to spend mainly on picking up the pieces – and meanwhile the UK is one of the worst places in the developed world for children to grow up in.

What we did

- 12 month UK wide project
- Secondary and primary research
- Literature review and data analysis
- Economic modelling
- Service level case studies
- Social return on investment assessments
- Two citizen's jury events
- Young Person's Reference Group
- Expert Learning Panel



Key findings

- An investment of £191 billion in targeted interventions will deliver a net return of £269 billion.
- An investment of £428 billion in universal childcare and paid parental leave provision will deliver a net return of £606 billion over a 20 - year period.
- If the Government invests in targeted interventions, universal childcare and paid parental leave, a saving of £880 billion would be made over 20 years – compared with the £4 trillion cost of business as usual.

Calculating social return on investment

- Social Return on Investment of children's services
 - Action for Children's East Dunbartonshire Family Service
 - Action for Children's Family Intervention Team/5+ Project, Caerphilly
 - Action for Children's Wheatley Children's Centre, Doncaster

Assessing the benefits

- For every £1 invested annually in Action for Children's targeted services designed to catch problems early, society benefits by between £7.60 and £9.20
- For every £1 invested in an Action for Children Children's Centre, a forecast social return to society of £4.60 is expected to be generated.

Six key service pathways to child well-being

- Link up and link in
- Think family
- Promote the positive
- Encourage action
- Factor in fun
- Recognise children's wider world



Our proposals for reform

- First, buy the services that make a difference including upfront investment in targeted early intervention
- Second, invest in essential universal provisions
- Third, improve the way that services work. To support taking this forward we have produced, in partnership with nef, 3 guides:
 - Co-producing children’s services
 - Measuring children’s well-being
 - Commissioning children’s services for better out comes

What next?

- Action for Children is taking these findings to UK politicians, seeking cross-party commitment to invest in essential services

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