

## OPEN LETTER TO ALL POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS FROM 147 CHILDREN'S CHARITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

As leaders of charities and organisations working with vulnerable children across the UK, we ask that you address the needs of our youngest citizens and set out how you will prioritise them in the next Parliament.

General elections are the moments when we debate and decide the nation's future and there is no greater investment that we, as a society, and you, as politicians, can make for our future prosperity than ensuring every child gets the best start in life. Strengthening childhoods builds a healthier society and a stronger economy.

There are almost 14 million children in the UK but their voices are missing from the national conversation and far too little attention has been paid to their needs, particularly those of the most vulnerable. Instead, the debate on Brexit means the issues affecting children are being crowded out of the national debate.

We are asking each of you to put children at the heart of this election. We invite you to listen directly to the voices of children and commit to three actions to improve their outcomes:

1. **Set out your party's priorities for vulnerable children.** The number of children in the UK living in poverty has risen to 4.1 million. A child goes into care every 15 minutes. One in eight 5 to 19 year olds have at least one mental health condition. Your parties must set out how they will protect children from these and other challenges like online harm, serious youth violence and the criminal exploitation of children. These are urgent problems that can leave children scarred for a lifetime, with consequences for the whole of society.
2. **Put children at the front of the queue for investment.** We know from our frontline experience that support from services and professionals can be crucial in helping children and families thrive, such as help for new parents to bond with their babies; support for pupils at risk of school exclusion; and child protection teams who intervene when children are in danger.

However, these services are increasingly facing a funding crisis, as the number of children needing support is continuing to rise – there has been a 17% increase in the number of children in care since 2010 - and the amount of money the Government provides to spend on children's services has fallen. The Local Government Association estimates that the funding gap for children's services will be £3.1 bn by 2024 and England's Children's Commissioner says £10bn is needed to ensure all disadvantaged children get a chance to thrive.

3. **Re-balance spending.** We're spending more on the consequences of children ending up in crisis and less and less on preventing crisis in the first place. In the past decade, spending on early intervention services fell by 49% while spending on statutory, late intervention services rose by 12%.

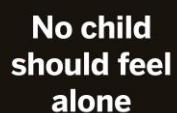
Early help services like children's centres are missing out on funding even though they play a crucial role in identifying children with developmental problems or families struggling at home. The next Government should ensure local authorities have the resources to run early intervention programmes which have been proven to work.

Only through an honest debate about how we respond to these challenges, and the urgency with which we do it, can this election help set us on a better path for all children.

This could be the most important General Election in a generation and the children we work with don't have a vote - so they must have a voice.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,



**Early Education**  
The British Association for Early Childhood Education

 **The Childhood Trust**  
Alleviating the impact of child poverty

resources for  
**autism**

**YOUNG MINDS**

 **KIDSCAPE**  
Help With Bullying

**iHV** Institute of  
Health Visiting  
Excellence in Practice

 **NAHT**  
FOR LEADERS, FOR LEARNERS

 national  
**education**  
union

**gmipa**  
GREATER MANCHESTER  
POVERTY ACTION

 Children's  
Rights Alliance  
for England

**coram** | better chances  
for children  
since 1739

Standing up for kids  
**JUST FOR KIDS**  LAW

British Youth Council  
**byc**

**BECOME.**  
THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE  
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

 **STREETDOCTORS**

# together trust



Centre for  
Research in  
Early  
Childhood



Championing advice and counselling



British Early Childhood Education  
Research Association

# RAINBOW TRUST

SUPPORTING FAMILIES  
WITH A SERIOUSLY ILL CHILD



# The Mulberry Bush

Showing the way in therapeutic care



# ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL



The Centre for Emotional Health

# N a s s



helps children  
communicate



Association  
of School and  
College Leaders



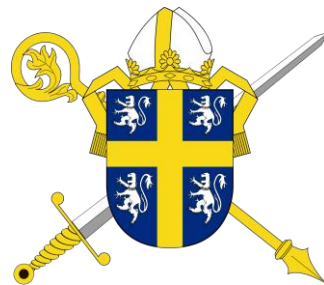
Scottish Out of School Care Network  
*Supporting children's rights to play, care and learning*



# Partnership for Young London



*Paul London*



 THE EQUALITY TRUST

Because more equal societies work better for everyone



Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

people supporting parents and children to learn together



for disabled children and young people in Sussex

TURN2US  
FIGHTING UK POVERTY



Enthusiasm™  
For young people

stem4:  
supporting teenage mental health



Our Time

Helping young people affected by parental mental illness



HEALTHY TEEN MINDS

**bacp** | counselling  
changes lives

**WINSTON'S  
WISH** **WW**

Giving hope to grieving children



**ADD-vance**  
The ADD-vance ADHD and Autism Trust



*for every parent*

 **ATD**  
FOURTH WORLD



 **nagalro**  
children seen and heard

**coram**BAAF  
ADOPTION & FOSTERING ACADEMY

 **Children & Young People's  
Mental Health Coalition**

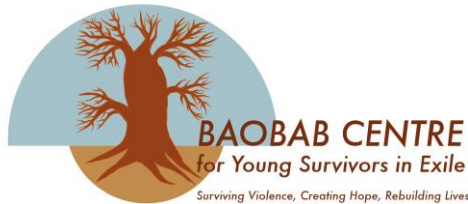
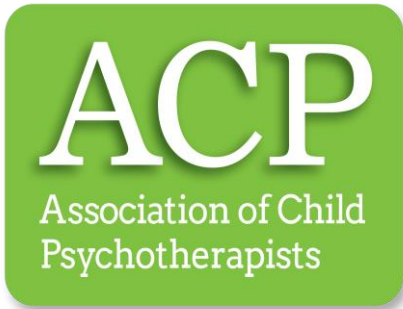
  
The Centre for  
Outcomes of Care

  
MHFA England

**SCOPE**  
= Equality for  
disabled people

 **Ambitious  
about Autism**

**SWU** Social  
Workers  
Union





**BACD**  
British Academy of  
Childhood Disability

**SCYJ**  
Standing Committee  
for Youth Justice

**Include Me Too**  
Inclusion · Diversity · Equality · Adventures

**CP Sport**  
Cerebral Palsy Sport

**SOCIAL WORKERS WITHOUT BORDERS**

**NAYJ**  
Justice for Children in Trouble  
[www.thenayj.org.uk](http://www.thenayj.org.uk)

**chancesFOR CHILDREN**  
**BUtLEuk**

**YOUNG LIVES  
vs CANCER**  
**CLIC SARGENT**

**np uk**

**Dorset Children's Foundation**

**Kids** Giving disabled children  
a brighter future

**nyas**  
national youth  
advocacy service

**leap**<sup>®</sup>  
confronting conflict

**tACTYC**  
Association for Professional  
Development in Early Years





National Network of Parent Carer Forums

'Our Strength Is Our Shared Experience'



SafeToNet  
FOUNDATION

NAPLIC))

nepacs

Supporting a positive future  
for prisoners and their families



YOUTH  
SPORT  
TRUST

YMCA



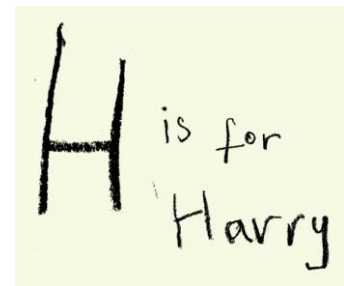
Because growing  
up can be hard

home  
for good



Helping children and young people  
put the pieces back together

The  
Fostering  
Network



40  
contact  
For families with disabled children

National  
Autistic  
Society



**REACH  
CHILDREN'S  
HUB**



**nct** **1ST 1,000 DAYS**  
NEW PARENT SUPPORT

together  
for  
short  
**Lives**

**catch  
22**



NATIONAL LEAVING CARE  
BENCHMARKING  
**FORUM**



National Development Team for Inclusion

**Alström Syndrome UK**  
Strength for today, hope for the future



**THE AIRE CENTRE**  
Advice on Individual Rights in Europe

Centre for  
Mental Health



Building  
stronger  
families  
**150 years**



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology