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The Scottish Government's recent commitment to incorporate the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scottish law is good news for families because the UNCRC recognises that, where possible, the family is the best place for a child to grow up. It states that a child: "For the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding."

And importantly it recognises that the state needs to support families to do this: "The family, as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance."

Right now, far too many families cannot meet their basic needs. Every day, Parenting across

Scotland's partner organisations see families who are struggling to pay their bills, who are resorting to food banks to feed their children and who simply cannot make ends meet no matter how much they try to budget.

possible, because the overwhelming majority of new parents want the best for their children.

It's a key time to make a difference and there are already some welcome initiatives in place – the new Best Start antenatal programme, a baby box for every new baby in Scotland, and the new health visitor pathway. To make sure these initiatives are able to deliver on their promises, they need to be adequately resourced.

The high take-up of universal services means that they can identify where families are having problems and direct them to appropriate support. Unfortunately, local authority budgets have been cut so drastically, with children and families services bearing the brunt, that all too often family support is simply not available. In order for children and families to thrive, central and local government need to invest in family support.

Only when families are able to meet their basic needs and have supportive universal services should we think about targeted programmes. There will be some parents who are still struggling; many who are vulnerable and need additional help. For some, this may be through family support, while for others, a parenting programme may have a role to play.

Call 21

Invest in relationship-based whole-family support

By Clare Simpson

"Asking parents to take part in these programmes when they don't know how they're going to put food on the table is a slap in the face"

The impact of growing up in poverty on families is devastating. Living in poor housing and feeling insecure about money is hardly conducive to good parenting. Asking parents to take part in parenting programmes when they don't know how they're going to put food on the table is more of a slap in the face to struggling families than a supportive move. If we truly want to ensure that parents can support their children, first, we need to make sure that they have the resources to do so.

When families set out on their parenting journey they need good universal services that offer the help, support and information they need. It's an important time for any new parent. For some, it can be that golden moment when change is

Holistic family support, which is relationship-based and works with the strengths of families must be the starting point. We believe it will be more financially affordable and, as importantly, effective in meeting families' needs. We need a new focus on supporting the whole family, recognising that families are where children are nurtured to grow and thrive.

We are calling for a Supporting Families Strategy that: ensures families have their basic needs met; provides comprehensive universal services; requires government departments to family-proof their policies; respects and values families; provides sufficient resources to local authorities to support families; and works with families in a relationship-based model using their strengths to help them thrive.



Picture: Belinda Lawley

"...a right to live with a family who cares for them..."

- Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Read more about supporting parents and families

> Call 9, page 29