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Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
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Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: 4Children's Response to the Department for Education consultation on Funding for children and young people with SEND**

4Children welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation and specifically to highlight issues we are aware of through our own work relating to current funding arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND).

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 Children's Centres as well as family and youth services across Britain. We develop, influence and shape national policy on all aspects of the lives of children, young people and families.

From our work in the early years sector we are continually informed of the difficulty in accessing SEND funding for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Inadequate funding arrangements for children in the foundation years can prevent early identification and response to need. The benefits of early identification of SEND are widely recognised. Identifying need and putting effective provision into place at the earliest opportunity improves long-term outcomes for children, as well as leading to financial savings by preventing difficulties from escalating.

While there are lower numbers of children with identified SEND in the under 5 age group, we know that this relates more closely to a lack of identification rather than a lack of need. As the Department for Education's own data show, there are almost two and half times the number of children aged 5 to eleven years old as there are 0 to 5 years old with identified SEND, suggesting that these needs are only being picked up when children reach school age. This is confirmed by the Ofsted data which states that 40% of children entering the Reception with SEND have not had their needs identified. Were further mechanisms and greater levels of funding in place for children in the early years to identify and respond to SEND we believe we would see higher numbers of children identified earlier, which in turn would lead to greater support and better outcomes.

We know from independent reviews that children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life,<sup>1</sup> that early intervention plays a critical role in building

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<sup>1</sup> Field, F (2010) *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances

children's social and emotional capabilities to forestall or prevent problems in later life,<sup>2</sup> and that good quality early years provision has a large impact on children's longer term outcomes.<sup>3</sup> We also know that nearly £17 billion per year is spent in England and Wales by the state on short-run late intervention.<sup>4</sup>

The overall verdict on early years interventions for children with disabilities is positive.<sup>5</sup> The Better Communication Research Programme, for example, found that children who have speech, language and communication needs should be helped as soon as possible, and that professional development support, across education and health, was essential for all those working with these children to recognise needs earlier and provide the right support.<sup>6</sup> There is also strong evidence from the Family Nurse Partnership Programme that outcomes are improved for the most vulnerable children and their families who participate in the programme for two years.<sup>7</sup>

The benefits of taking an early intervention approach was recognised in the Department for Education's *special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*<sup>8</sup> which set out principles to support the early identification of children and young people's needs and early intervention to support them. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which all early years providers must follow, also sets out the arrangements for early years providers to identify and respond to SEND. And yet we know that childcare and early years provision for children with disabilities is patchy and 41% of parent carers say their children with SEND do not access the full 15 hours of the free entitlement for early education for three and four year olds.<sup>9</sup>

As a charity representing children and families we strongly urge that any reforms to improve SEND funding ensures appropriate distribution to early years providers in order to both identify children at an early stage who would benefit from further support, and put that support into place at the earliest possible opportunity. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further, and would be happy to provide any further information that might be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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<sup>2</sup> Allen, G (2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*. An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government

<sup>3</sup> Tickell, Dame C (2011) *The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning* An Independent Report on the Early Years Foundation Stage to Her Majesty's Government

<sup>4</sup> Early Intervention Foundation (2015) *Spending on Late Intervention: How we can do better for less*

<sup>5</sup> C4EO (2009) *Improving the wellbeing of disabled children (up to age 8) and their families through increasing the quality and range of early years interventions*. Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit

<sup>6</sup> Department for Education (2011) *Better communication research project*

<sup>7</sup> Department of Health (2011) *The Family-Nurse Partnership Programme in England*. Birkbeck, University of London

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education (2014) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*

<sup>9</sup> Every Disabled Child Matters et al (2014) *Parliamentary Inquiry into childcare for disabled children: Levelling the playing field for families with disabled children and young people*