

“49% of people think political parties should do more for children and families”



MAKING BRITAIN GREAT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



A manifesto for the next Parliament

Too many children and families are held back because they do not have the support they need to **flourish**. As a country we can and must do better.

As we move beyond the economic crisis, we have an historic **opportunity** to rethink our **aspirations** and shift our **ambition** for children and families.

We have the ability to *Make Britain Great for Children and Families*.

We must make it happen.

In early 2014, 4Children set out a radical manifesto for positive change for children and families throughout Britain. Important for all families, this new approach is vital to transforming the outcomes for the most vulnerable. From improved family support to better childcare, communities and social care, 4Children is throwing down the gauntlet for decision makers everywhere to *Make Britain Great for Children and Families*. This is our manifesto for the next Parliament.

Families are at the heart of our country. They raise our children, care for those who are sick and provide food and finances for those in hardship. Families are our country's greatest assets but too many are currently struggling to get the help they need and being held back as a result.

The statistics demand that we do better. 4Children is calling for a 10 year commitment to overhaul our public support for children and families from the way we work to the way we care. As we move beyond the economic crisis, it's time to put families first. When families flourish, Britain flourishes.

Whilst life for children and families has changed dramatically over the last 30 years, services and support have often struggled to keep up. We know that a good childhood sets children up for life leaving them more likely to be healthy, to form positive relationships, to learn and to be in employment in later life. And we know that parents across the country want the best for their children. But for too many, the odds are stacked against them.

A shortage of affordable, high quality and flexible childcare can limit parents' work choices and children's chances. The gap between how children from poorer and better off backgrounds do in education and life remains stubbornly wide. Struggling families and young people too often reach crisis point without receiving help. And too many services are still operating in the silos that see part of the problem and not the whole, and focusing on the symptoms rather than tackling the cause.

But this isn't inevitable. Political parties have the power and the opportunity to revolutionise support for children and families. Politicians have choices as parents have choices at the ballot box. Families who have carried the weight of the economic crisis and are looking to the future are now asking which party will *Make Britain Great for Children and Families*? Families know how much more their children could achieve if they could get the right help.

4Children's manifesto sets out the steps necessary in the next Parliament to *Make Britain Great for Children and Families*.

1. GIVING CHILDREN THE BEST START - EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE

Giving children the best start in life is fundamental for all children but especially for disadvantaged children. All the research shows that the first months and years are the most important in determining long term life chances. Good health and parenting support is essential to get babies off to a good start and early education and childcare boosts children's development and achievement.

At the same time, in a modern country, childcare is crucial if parents are to get into and stay in employment and is essential to help families out of poverty. But many parents still struggle to find the flexible local childcare they need at a price they can afford. Rising childcare costs leave some parents struggling to make ends meet with increasing personal debt. Too many parents, especially mothers, are being held back as a result. We need a 10 year plan to achieve a guarantee of universal childcare for families.

“Politicians should require schools to open their doors from 8am-6pm throughout the year to increase childcare places”

Increasing the number of hours of existing childcare provision for all 2, 3 and 4-year-olds from 15 to 25 hours would have a direct impact on parents ability to work. Expanding this to 1-year-olds would help ensure that parents, who want to, are able to re-enter the labour market at the end of maternity or parental leave.

Opening up school buildings before and after school hours and during holidays will enable local communities to use the space for childcare. Making better use of school buildings, which are trusted community resources, not only helps families but also makes economic sense – getting the most out of existing assets. Incentives and funding to ‘pump-prime’ new developments would encourage new provision in areas where it doesn't currently exist. This is a tried and tested method which has been run before helping develop hundreds of thousands of childcare places in schools.

To improve quality, we need investment in the early years workforce to increase skills and drive high quality care. Making sure there are enough staff in childcare settings to guarantee children's safety and quality delivery will be essential. And increasing personalised extra support, through a higher Early Years Pupil Premium, to the most disadvantaged children will help close the gap in outcomes and spend money where it will make the most difference.

To truly modernise the childcare system, we should coordinate local provision through childcare hubs to give parents access to all the information and options they need.

In the next Parliament:

- Commit to a universal childcare guarantee from 0-14 over the next 10 years. Prioritise:
 - » Extending funded provision for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds from 15 to 25 hours per week and introducing provision after maternity or parental leave
 - » Require schools to open their doors throughout the year from 8am-6pm to allow provision of before and after school care and holiday activities
 - » Create a new out of school development fund to support communities to set up local out of school clubs
- Improve quality through:
 - » Increasing the Early Years Pupil Premium to the school level
 - » Investing in the early years workforce
 - » Extending 4Children's Childcare Hub pilots across the country to provide modern, flexible, coordinated support

“49% of people think that the future of children and young people today will be worse than their own”

2. HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL

For too many young people, the teenage years are fraught with difficulties. 1 in 12 young people self-harm; almost a million young people are not in education, employment or training; and far too many young people struggle to cope with alcohol and drug abuse and face a life time of low achievement. The social and economic cost to our society of leaving problems to escalate into adulthood cannot be underestimated.

We need to make sure that young people have support and opportunities in their communities as they grow. And for those young people who need extra help, there needs to be specialist support. We must act urgently to protect young people from the violence of gangs, guns and sexual exploitation that remain a part of life for too many of our most vulnerable young people.

More clubs for young people are needed in the community to offer safe places, activities and support for teenagers outside school. For young people with more complex problems specialist intensive support is also needed. This new ‘Teenage Turnaround’ approach should be targeted at the 1 million young people who are identified as facing one or more problems. Working with a trusted professional to help overcome challenges with education, health, social care and justice, the programme would offer intensive holistic support for each young person in need – preventing problems from spiralling into adulthood.

In the next Parliament:

- Introduce a Teenage Turnaround programme of intensive support for those with emerging problems
- Create a new youth community fund to set up local clubs
- Better integrate youth provision for seamless support

“Stopping problems in the teenage years from escalating benefits us all”

3. HELPING STRUGGLING FAMILIES TO AVOID CRISIS

All families need support from time to time but too many are struggling to cope, often with a complex mix of health, financial, mental health and social problems. In Britain today 1 in 5 parents have a mental health problem; 1 million children grow up in a household with domestic violence and 2.6 million with a parent who drinks hazardedly. Support is particularly important during pregnancy and following birth.

However families tell us they need better help earlier when problems emerge but that services are not available until crisis hits. A large scale shift to early intervention would prevent the social, emotional and financial cost of letting crisis happen. According to the National Audit Office, early action could bring a return on investment of up to 4 to 1 in the long term – a significant saving.

Maintaining the intensive family support of the Troubled Families programme should be part of a wider move to co-ordinate and integrate services around the holistic needs of families. Expanding the reach of this integrated and intensive family support to include families before they reach crisis point will be vital in helping avoid the social and economic cost of letting crisis happen.

Moving from a culture of late intervention, by incrementally increasing the percentage of overall budgets going towards early intervention programmes, will prevent problems from escalating and bring significant return on investment.

In the next Parliament:

- Invest in the expansion of intensive family support to the half a million families who are just coping
- Embed a culture of early intervention across all areas of spending and services for children and families
- Lead the practice of holistic, strengths based family support in all public services

DELIVERING REAL CHANGE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

REDESIGNING SERVICES BY EXTENDING SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRES TO BECOME CHILDREN AND FAMILY COMMUNITY HUBS

Services aren't keeping up with family life and with unprecedented pressure on budgets, too many families aren't getting the help they need. Silo-working, late intervention and lack of responsiveness to the needs of families is not only leading to a confusing bureaucratic maze but more importantly to serious failings for children. Families need joined-up, easy to understand, and easy to access services which they can trust.

We need a new local infrastructure for services and support for children, young people and families - from early intervention to social care. That's why 4Children is working with local authorities to develop new Children and Family Community Hubs. These are game changers for children and families building on the tried and tested work of Sure Start Children's Centres.

Since their introduction, Children's Centres have led the way in offering integrated support around the needs of children and families. They have become invaluable community resources with over a million families relying on their services. Community Hubs build on this effective approach but go further by extending their reach to wider services and social care, providing the basis for a major overhaul of support for the most vulnerable with added protection and intensive help.

The approach builds on an existing infrastructure providing the springboard needed to revolutionise wider services and social care into an integrated family approach.

In the next Parliament:

- Extend Sure Start Children's Centres into local Children and Family Community Hubs:
 - » Place Community Hubs at the heart of communities bringing together local support and resources in a joined up way
 - » Ensure Hubs provide universal as well as targeted services, building early intervention in at the core as well as support for families with complex needs
 - » Align Hubs with support for children as they grow up from 0 - 19
 - » Commit to a major overhaul of social care with Community Hubs at the heart of developments

“500,000 families are on the edge of crisis and just coping”

For statistical source details please visit www.4Children.org.uk



Choose to Make Britain Great for Children and Families

Back 4Children's manifesto for the next Parliament

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4Children is the national charity all about children and families. We develop, influence and shape national policy on all aspects of the lives of children, young people and families. We have led a joined-up, integrated approach to children's services and over the last 10 years have dramatically increased the services we provide in response to families' needs. We run over 100 children's centres, alongside nurseries, family support and youth provision. We understand what families need and continually campaign for change.

Find out about 4Children's wide range of support programmes, campaigns, services, products and events at www.4Children.org.uk.