

# Barnardo's Scotland News Release

**Under strict embargo until 0001hours – Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

## **BARNARDO'S SCOTLAND CALLS ON THE FIRST MINISTER TO PRIORITISE CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING**

Summary calls: Improve the well being of Scotland's children  
Tackling the inequality of child poverty  
Setting out 5-10 year strategies for early years and parenting support services.

Barnardo's Scotland is calling on the First Minister, Alex Salmond, to improve the well-being of Scotland's children after the country was ranked next to last out of 24 OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, in a new report published by the children's charity today (Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007).

The report called the *Index of Wellbeing for Children in Scotland*<sup>1</sup> compares the international ranking for Scotland's children in measures of child poverty, economic participation, education, suicide, teenage pregnancies, birth weight and dental health<sup>2</sup>. This is the first time that the outcomes for Scotland's children have been analysed and Scotland given a place in the international ranking and it makes for uncomfortable reading.

Scotland is performing most poorly in terms of child poverty, economic participation for 15-19 year olds and teenage pregnancy and poorly in terms of suicide rates, low birth-weight and dental health. It is not all bad news as there is a relatively good performance in education and this is seen as a sign of hope for the future. The report notes that it is too early to tell if recent Scottish Executive policies have made any difference.

This report confirms the findings of other reports where international comparisons have been used which highlight that children in the UK have relatively poor outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

Martin Crewe, Director of Barnardo's Scotland, said: "This report clearly highlights that urgent action needs to be taken to improve the well being of children in Scotland. Through our work, we know how difficult it is for children who are missing out on opportunities and we urge the Scottish Executive to prioritise children's services in the allocation of resources through the Comprehensive Spending Review. We need long term investment in children's futures, particularly in the development of preventative services. We need to learn the lessons from the relatively good performance in education and use that to improve outcomes for children in other areas.

"We know that early years investment has long term benefits for the well being of children and young people. This is a great opportunity for the First Minister and Scottish Government to prioritise children and young people by tackling the inequality of child poverty and setting out 5-10 year strategies for early years and parenting support services."

**Spokespeople are available for pre-recorded and live interviews – please telephone 0131 314 6630/31**

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### **Notes to Editors:**

<sup>1</sup>The Index of Wellbeing for Children in Scotland compares outcomes for children and young people in 30 member countries (31 when Scotland is separated out) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); for some countries the full set of data is not available for a comparison. The OECD consists of a group of countries who share a commitment to democratic government and the market economy.

*More Follows:*

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<sup>2</sup> Summary of the findings:

Scotland Performance

- *Overall ranking*: Scotland is ranked equal 22<sup>nd</sup> with Portugal out of 24
- *Child poverty*: Scotland is ranked 23 out of 28; UK is at 24.
- *Economic participation of young people aged 15 to 19*; Scotland is ranked 24 out of 28; UK is at 21.
- *Education*: Scotland is ranked 8 out of 31 countries; UK is at 11.
- *Suicide*: Scotland is ranked in equal 19<sup>th</sup> position with Poland out of 30; UK is ranked 7<sup>th</sup>.
- *Teenage pregnancies*: Scotland is ranked 28 out of 31; UK is at 27
- *Low Birth weight*: Scotland is equal 24<sup>th</sup> with Portugal out of 31; UK is 26<sup>th</sup> out of 31.
- *Dental health*: Scotland is ranked 19 out of 28; UK is at 3

Overall and Variable Performances

- The overall top performing countries were Scandinavian countries which occupied three of the top four spots with Sweden and Denmark ranking the highest.
- *Suicide*: The best performers were Mediterranean countries – Portugal, Greece, Italy, Spain - while the worst tended to be from Northern climes such as Iceland, Finland, Norway and Canada.
- *Child Poverty*: The best performers were Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, occupying the top four positions; the worse performers are a mixture of rich countries like Scotland, UK and the USA and poorer countries like Mexico and Turkey.
- *Economic participation of young people aged 15 to 19*; The best performers were a mixture of European countries with Denmark and Luxembourg being in the top two; the worst performers were generally poorer countries like Mexico, Turkey and Slovak Republic.
- *Education*: The best performers were among the richer countries but not the richest so that Finland, Canada and Japan, along with the relatively poorer Korea were in the in the top 4; Mexico and Turkey along with the poorer Mediterranean countries – Italy, Portugal and Greece – were in the lowest positions.
- *Teenage pregnancies*: The best performers were a mixture of Scandinavian countries – Denmark and Sweden – along with Asian countries Japan and Korea; the worst performers are Mexico, Turkey, USA, Scotland and the UK.
- *Low Birth weight*: Scandinavian countries (Finland, Sweden and Norway) were the best performers along with Iceland (1<sup>st</sup>) and Korea (3<sup>rd</sup>) and the poorest performers were Japan, Hungary, Greece, Turkey, the UK and Scotland.
- *Dental health*: Generally, richer countries performed better than poorer countries.

<sup>3</sup> The Index of Wellbeing for Children in Scotland is the first ever report of its kind that compares Scotland's performance to other countries. A similar report by UNICEF published in February 2007 only compared the UK as whole across 21 industrialised countries.

The report was commissioned by Barnardo's Scotland and produced by John McLaren, economic consultant. It is available from Barnardo's Scotland's media office – telephone 0131 314 6630/31 – on request.

Barnardo's Scotland works directly with more than 13,000 children, young people and their families in over 60 projects across the country. This includes work with children affected by today's most urgent issues: poverty, homelessness, disability, bereavement and abuse. Barnardo's vision is that the lives of children and young people should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. Its purpose is to help the most vulnerable children and young people transform their lives and fulfil their potential.

For more information about Barnardo's visit our website at [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

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