

Investing in children: What do we know? What should we do? ^[1]

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In 1998, a conference brought together US psychologists, economists, sociologists, demographers, political scientists, social workers, and medical doctors, to review what we know about the processes that affect child development and how we might wisely increase public and private investments in children to promote both their well-being and the productivity of the next generation. Current investments in children were examined and how they affect the development of the skills children need to succeed as adults in work, family, and society was discussed. What we have learned about childhood interventions from birth to college and what further investments in children are required, especially for disadvantaged children was reviewed. This paper summarises the findings of the conference, and we outline our views regarding a number of key investments. We conclude that there is no better way to break the cycle of poverty and inequality than to invest in children. Expanded investment in five key areas is proposed: programmes to improve the health of women of childbearing age; early childhood interventions, targeted to the most disadvantaged children; measures to raise the quality of child care and pre-school education; after-school and mentoring programmes; and programmes to raise the level of college attendance by high-ability youth from low-income families.

Region: Europe ^[4]

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