

Start Strong welcome announcement of preparation of Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Start Strong, an expert body on children's early care and education has today welcomed Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD, announcement that during 2012 her Department, in consultation with key stakeholders, will develop Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy, for children aged 0-6 years.

Start Strong Director Cíairín de Buis stated: "We are delighted at today's announcement by Minister Fitzgerald that the Department of Children will develop Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy in consultation with other key stakeholders. Early intervention in children's lives and quality early childhood experiences are crucial to a child's development and Start Strong has campaigned tirelessly on the need for and benefits of an Early Years Strategy.

"There is a rapidly growing body of evidence which shows that providing high quality early years (years 0-6) interventions and supports saves countries very significant social care costs in the long term. Research evidence shows that quality supports in children's early years reduces the need for later expenditure in the criminal justice system, healthcare and remedial education. Through its effectiveness in prevention and early intervention, quality early care and education reduces future social expenditure by the State."

She continued: "While there are immediate costs in delivering high quality care and education services and supports for all young children, the benefits transform children's life chances as they grow older.

"This Strategy is an investment in our children and it will help build the foundations of Ireland's future economic growth. Cost-benefit analysis of early childhood supports has shown a significant return on investment, one American study showed up to 16 times the cost, with much of the return being to the State. It is an investment worth making that delivers benefits for children, for the economy and for society as a whole."

Ms Buis concluded by stating that it was crucial that the National Early Years Strategy reflect stronger policies and services during children's first six years which will save the State money and bring massive benefits for children and society.

-reprinted from Start Strong

Region: Europe ^[2]

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