

NSPCC Scotland response to Scottish Government debate: National Parenting Strategy for Scotland

May 2012

Key message

- **NSPCC Scotland calls on the Scottish Government to place the promotion of infant mental health at the heart of the National Parenting Strategy**

Parenting is fundamentally about providing the safe, nurturing care a child needs to grow to his or her full potential. Therefore the key ambition of the proposed National Parenting Strategy should be ensuring such care for every child in Scotland.

NSPCC Scotland believes that this can best be achieved by placing the promotion of infant mental health and development firmly at the heart of the parenting strategy, ensuring that efforts are geared towards securing positive parent-child attachment.

Secure attachment to an adult caregiver, especially in the first year of life is one of the biggest protective factors against abuse.ⁱ Maltreated children who receive safe nurturing care quickly enough, can make remarkable recoveries.ⁱⁱ By giving parents the right support to provide the safe nurturing care their children need, the National Parenting Strategy can have a significant impact on child well-being in Scotland, and help to prevent negative abuse or maltreatment.

Most parents want to do the best for their children, and we recognise that all parents will require some support at some stage. However, there are those parents who will require more intensive support than others. Where parents struggle with mental health problems, domestic abuse, or have substance misuse issues, particularly when caring for young babies, this can affect the bond between them and their baby, and so may leave babies more at risk.

At the heart of any strategy for intervention should be work to support the development of secure attachment between baby and caregiver, strong family relationships and quality parenting. While the Parenting Strategy is intended to support all parents, we strongly believe that progressive universalist approaches must be supplemented by intervention where children are most at risk. Without some targeting, action will come too late for too many children to ever recover from the damage of abuse.

For further information, please contact:

Joanne Smith
Public Affairs Officer
Joanne.smith@nspcc.org.uk

ⁱ Shonkoff, J.P. and Philips, D.A. (2002) *From neurons to neighbourhoods: the science of early childhood development*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press

ⁱⁱ Dozier, M. et al. Effects of an attachment