



WE LISTEN, WE SUPPORT,  
WE TAKE ACTION  
For Scotland's vulnerable  
children and families

## Health Strategy for Scotland 2011-15 31 January 2012

For over 125 years, CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup> has been working to build a better future for Scotland's vulnerable children and families. We listen, we support and we take action by delivering services in homes and communities across Scotland. We work to safeguard children and young people, to support them within their homes and to help them recover from abuse, neglect and violence.

CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup> has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop and implement a national training, outreach and helpline service for kinship carers and their families. The service aims to improve children's lives by providing emotional and practical support to kinship carers and to work with kinship care families to help them find their voice.

CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup> welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to mental health and to developing a long term mental health strategy for Scotland. We note that ChildLine in Scotland, which we currently operate on behalf of NSPCC, has made a full submission addressing the substantive issues from the perspective of children and young people's needs asked in the consultation. CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup> supports this submission and concurs with the points made therein.

We have two additional points to make.

The first is that there is a need for this mental health strategy to be effectively joined up with other Scottish Government policy developments and strategies, including in particular, *Getting it Right for Every Child*, the Child Poverty Strategy, *Equally Well*, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act and framework, and the Early Years framework.

Secondly, from our consultation and engagement with kinship carers, CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup> is aware of their real concerns about the mental wellbeing of their children and the difficulties they are experiencing locally in accessing appropriate therapeutic and other mental health services. One of the issues is that despite many of the children in kinship care arrangements being formally looked after and therefore in theory, with entitlements and rights that accompany that status, because they are in kinship care, they are not in practice able to access appropriate supports, largely due to a lack of resources and awareness of their particular needs.

The mental health strategy should acknowledge the particular needs of kinship care families, and in particular, children and young people living in kinship care who often have not had the best start in life and need support to recover from



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emotional and physical trauma and abuse. The strategy should also set out how agencies might address this group of children's needs more effectively in the future. It should also acknowledge the existence of kinship care status in its own right and ensure that agencies are aware of what that status means. For more information, please contact the CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup> policy team at [policy@children1st.org.uk](mailto:policy@children1st.org.uk) or on 0131 446 3979.