

## YES TO PLAY



Play is children's inborn learning drive. Active, social play (as often as possible outdoors) is how the under-sevens were designed by evolution to develop:

- **physical fitness**, bodily control and coordination, and physical self-confidence
- **personal qualities**, including creativity, problem-solving skills, self-regulation and emotional resilience
- **social skills**, such as getting along with other children, communication and language skills, and the ability to work collaboratively
- **cognitive capacities** like the use of language to explore and express their ideas, and 'common-sense understanding' of the world and how it works.

In European countries where children attend play-based kindergarten till the age of six or seven, they have higher levels of health and well-being than in Scotland. **They also score higher in international charts of educational achievement.**

## WHY UPSTART?

Young children today lead more timetabled and sedentary lives than previous generations, with few opportunities for self-directed, outdoor, social play.

Scotland's very early school starting age compounds this problem, by confining four- and five-year-olds to desk-work for hours each day.

As children's lifestyles changed, we've seen an alarming rise in physical and mental health problems, putting increasing pressure on health and social services.

### Scottish children among least active in world

Herald 16.11.16

Lack of outdoor play in early childhood is linked to obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis, Vitamin D deficiency and other long-term health problems.

### Decline of free play and rise in children's mental health disorders

The Lancet 1.11.17

It's also linked to mental health problems. More and more Scottish children are struggling with stress, anxiety, attention problems, eating disorders, self-harm and depression.

### The mental health scandal blighting a generation of Scotland's young people

Sunday Herald 30.10.17

There is NO evidence that an early start on school-work pays long-term dividends. But a growing body of research links it to problems with health and well-being as time goes on.

## NO TO TESTS



Concern about the poverty-related attainment gap has led the Scottish government to introduce national assessments in literacy and numeracy, starting at P1 when children are four or five. In England, the USA and Australia, national standard-ised testing in primary schools has resulted in:

- **over-focus on literacy and numeracy skills** at an increasingly early age (not only in Primary 1 but also during children's nursery years)
- **less play, creativity and outdoor activity**
- **anxiety about test results** among teachers and parents and, of course, children
- **no long-term improvement in social mobility.**

On the other hand, **all** under-sevens benefit from outdoor play, creative activities, stories, music, art and science explorations. And – according to the international evidence – **these are the type of early educational experiences that help close the achievement gap in the long run.**

# UPSTART

a campaign to introduce a  
**kindergarten stage**  
for children aged  
three to seven



Upstart Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC047775). Its principal contact address is The Old Police Station, Isleornsay, Isle of Skye IV43 8QR.

**Would the government still pay for full-time education at 4/5?**

**YES!** A kindergarten stage would not mean any change in children's entitlement to state-funded education, simply a change in the ethos of education for the under-sevens.

What about children who are keen on literacy/ maths? Would they be held back?

Absolutely not! They'd be supported and encouraged, as in a loving family home. Kindergarten education is about supporting children at their own developmental level. So children aren't 'held back' and neither are they pressed to do academic tasks before they are ready.



We are an alliance of parents, early years practitioners, teachers, playworkers, health and social work professionals and others concerned about the education and well-being of Scotland's next generation.

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For further information (including evidence base for research cited in this leaflet), see the Upstart Scotland website.

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**OUR CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE.**



**What happens to our youngest children has long-term consequences for everyone.**