

# CHILDREN'S WELLBEING MANIFESTO

Policy initiatives promoting healthy emotional development in children

## PREAMBLE

All societies are profoundly shaped - for better or worse - by how we rear children. This has been the overwhelming conclusion of recent ground-breaking research across a range of disciplines. A new consensus is emerging on how we should care for our children. Throwing new light on how best to help children flourish, this knowledge offers compelling evidence as to the kinds of social policies that will help all parents in their vital task, thereby reducing a host of societal dysfunctions, improving public health and social sustainability.

The following propositions are based on the best initiatives that have been tried and tested in numerous countries, and/or withstood rigorous tests of cost-benefit analysis. Such investments in the wellbeing of children, psychologically as well as physically, have been convincingly shown to yield economic as well as social rewards far exceeding the investment. More significantly, they are measures aimed at supporting what is most important, irreplaceable and ultimately not measurable: familial love and emotional wellbeing.

The main source of children's emotional wellbeing comes from *relationships* - from their deepest attachments to mothers, fathers, grandparents and a few cherished others. Early childhood in particular is a time when children's wellbeing and capacity to flourish are overwhelmingly about love, attachment and connectedness, and so it is a time they should spend mostly in the presence of these vital attachment figures. In recognition of this universal truth, social policy must re-orient itself towards supporting young children's right to remain, for the first two to three years, as much as possible in the presence of their 'attachment' relationships.

<http://www.our-emotional-health.com/manifesto.html>

## **Policy initiatives promoting healthy emotional development in children**

*In a world increasingly driven by imperatives of profit and market forces, we hold that parental and family love matters most, it is at the very centre of human and social wellbeing; and thus we propose the following ways to support parents in the most important job in the world.*

1. Establishment of new community 'hubs' for parent support called: **'Parent and Child Support Centres'** in every borough.
2. Increased support for early-intervention initiatives, particularly for disadvantaged populations.
3. Encourage hospitals to increase their focus on the **psychological** needs of mothers and infants surrounding labour.
4. Provide support for mothers to aim towards full-term breastfeeding (as recommended by the World Health Organization and UNICEF).
5. Extend Medicare health care cover
6. Encourage and expand support for non-profit, community based or co-operative childcare.
7. Improve the quality of existing childcare.
8. Support Children's Right to Play
9. Introduce maternity and paternity leave with pay.
10. Support fathers' involvement in children's lives.
11. Workplace Reform: encourage mother/father-friendly workplaces.
12. Free re-training and remission of education expenses for all primary caregivers on re-entry to workplace.
13. Universal free, non-compulsory Preschool for 3 and 4 year olds.
14. Legislate against all corporal punishment of children.
15. Prohibit television, print and in-school advertising and marketing that targets children under 12 .

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