

Rt Hon. Gordon Brown MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

29<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Dear Prime Minister

We the undersigned want to alert you to the fact that the Government's parenting agenda could be jeopardised by the erosion of a well-funded, well-trained health visitor service available to all parents of children under five.

As a coalition of organisations with expertise in families and parenting, adult and infant mental health and children we urge you to make sure that there are enough health visitors to see every family in Britain and give extra support for those who need it.

Our concern is that health visitor numbers vary wildly throughout the country so that there are no longer enough of them in some areas to play the key role the government would like in early years support, parenting and early intervention. This can be remedied with a national commitment to:

- A universal health visitor service for all parents with an intensive service for parents who will benefit most.
- A preventative health visitor service – the key to unlocking support for vulnerable families who are still missing out
- Better training for health visitors and a better career structure.

If health visitors are given the right recognition and role they could be key to identifying and acting to tackle serious problems from postnatal depression, domestic violence, emerging parenting or behavioural difficulties to childhood obesity.

The Treasury report Aiming High (2007) says that "Midwives and health visitors provide an invaluable universal service to parents and parents to be," and praises the leading role that health visitors play in Brighton's Children's Centres.

But the National Audit Office's report into Sure Start Centres considered that shortages of health visitors and funding pressures within Primary Care Trusts had contributed to difficulties in gaining commitment from health organisations to children's centres.

A YouGov poll this March for the Family and Parenting Institute shows that health visitors are parents' preferred source of parenting advice and support on their child's health and development.

Yours sincerely

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and on behalf of:

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Sara Rance	Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist	Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Trust
Rosemary Clarke	Head of Bookstart	Booktrust
David Hawker	Director of Children's Services	Brighton & Hove Children & Young People's Trust
David Holmes	Chief Executive	British Association for Adoption & Fostering
Christopher Turner OBE	Principal	Brixham College, Devon
Rita Nag	Co-Manager	Centre for Fun & Families
Helen White	Deputy Team manager	Children and Families Team, Children and Young People's Directorate, Gloucestershire
Cay Byford	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Representative	Contact a Family
Helen Fleming	Project Co-ordinator	Contact A Family Southwark
Dr Carol Homden	Chief Executive Officer	Coram Family
Cheryll Adams	Acting Lead Professional Officer	Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association
Alison Garnham and Emma Knights	Joint-Chief Executives	Daycare Trust
Algin Saydar	Executive Director	Derman
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Helen Dent	Chief Executive	Family Welfare Association
Duncan Fisher	Chief Executive	Fathers Direct
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Kath Whittaker	Family Support Manager	Gardners Lane Childrens Centre,

Judy Moorhouse	Chair	Gloucestershire
Ben Benzinski	Family Therapist	General Teaching Council for England
Sue Campbell	Health Visitor	Gloucestershire CAMHS
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Richard Pincott	Parental Involvement Development Worker	Links with Schools, Nottinghamshire Children's Fund
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Jonathan Douglas	Director	National Literacy Trust
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Maggie Jones	Chief Executive, Director	NCVCCO
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Georgina Rhymes		PARC (Essex)
Peter Silva	Chief Executive Officer	Peers Early Education Partnership
Sheryl Jordan	Project Manager	Positive Parenting Programmes, Coventry
Steve Alexander	Chief Executive	Pre-School Learning Alliance
Sandra Horley OBE	Chief Executive	Refuge
Susan Aitken	Deputy Manager - Development	Refugee Action
Sarah Woodhouse	Chief Executive	Right from the Start
Sue Greenfield	Senior Lecturer Early Childhood Studies	Roehampton University
Dr Gillian Aston	President of the Forum on Maternity and the Newborn	Royal Society of Medicine
Janet Davies	Teenage Parent Project Coordinator	Salford Foundation
Jan Tallis	Chief Executive	School-Home Support Service UK
Clare Silk	Merton Development Officer	Sutton and Merton Contact a Family,
Karen Woodall	Director	The Centre for Separated Families
Linda Murphy	Co-ordinator & Single Commissioner of Parenting	The Children's Trust Unit, City of York Council

Maureen Price	Manager, PATA Toddler Project	The PATA Centre
Catherine Blunstone	Manager	The Women's Centre for Blackburn & district
Kevin Coyne	head of health	Unite
Dr. Judy Hutchings	Incredible Years Wales	University of Wales, Bangor
Professor Sarah Stewart-Brown	Director of the Health Sciences Research Institute and Chair of Public Health	Warwick Medical School
George Hosking	Chief Executive	WAVE Trust (Tackling the roots of violence)
Lydia Keyte	Chairman	What about the Children?
Dr Sebastian Kraemer	Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist	Whittington Hospital and Honorary Consultant, Tavistock Clinic
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Adrienne Katz	Chief Executive	Young Voice
Robin Balbernie	Child psychotherapist	
The Rt Revd Lord Harries of Pentregarth		