



Secretary of State for Education
Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

By email

10 July 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of the First 1001 Days Movement, congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Education.

The First 1001 Days Movement is an alliance of over 200 charities and professionals with a shared mission to champion babies' emotional wellbeing and development.

We submitted evidence to Sir David Bell's review before the election, because we share your view that, "our childcare system must be about life chances for children, as well as work choices for parents." As well as expanding access to childcare, you noted the need to drive up standards. We agree, and recommended for example, "training in infant mental health for nursery staff and all those working in paid settings caring for under-2s".

While we await the next steps of the review, we are writing with an urgent concern about another area of DfE policy that impacts babies. We are concerned for the future of the Start for Life programme. The DfE-led elements of the programme, as you will know, included funding to establish Family Hubs in 75 local authorities. However, funding ends on 1 April 2025, and we are concerned that Family Hubs may be forced to reduce their opening hours, or close, as a result.

Our 'Manifesto for Babies' previously called for Start for Life funding to be extended so that every neighbourhood has a Family Hub or Children's Centre. This alone won't improve babies' life chances – the backbone of support comes from the services themselves; health visiting parent-infant relationship teams, Family Nurse Partnerships and Midwifery Continuity of Care teams. But being located in the community means that services can reach vulnerable babies, and parents can access services. These services need a home, regardless of what you call that home.

The Start for Life programme only began in earnest two years ago. We know from Sure Start that it takes more than two years to judge success. So we hope you will extend funding in the impending spending review, rather than allow it to end, and see closures. We hope that you will work across departmental boundaries to give babies the best start in life, and we are also writing to your Cabinet colleague Wes Streeting as the programme spans the two departments. Our Steering Group of charity Chief Executives would also be delighted to brief you on this and other recommendations of relevance from our, '[Manifesto for Babies](#)'.



The First 1001 Days Movement has always been a constructive partner and critical friend of government. We have hosted ministerial visits, contributed to guidance and worked with officials to glean insights from services and families. Our members support thousands of families across the country, so we understand the challenges experienced by new parents and babies. Our webinars and newsletter reach hundreds of service providers and professionals and we would be delighted to take a short article from you or invite you to speak at a webinar.

We stand ready to help you achieve your ambition to improve children's life chances. Please let us know when is convenient to meet, via tamora@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you and your team.

Yours sincerely

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tamora Langley in blue ink.

Convenor, First 1001 Days Movement

Handwritten signature of Anna Feuchtwang in black ink.

Anna Feuchtwang, Chief Executive Officer, NCB

Handwritten signature of Sir Peter Wanless in black ink.

Sir Peter Wanless, Chief Executive Officer, NSPCC

Handwritten signature of Professor Jane Barlow in black ink.

Professor Jane Barlow, President, AiMH UK

Handwritten signature of Kathy Jones in black ink.

Kathy Jones, CEO, Fatherhood Institute

Handwritten signature of Alison Morton in black ink.

Alison Morton, CEO, Institute of Health Visiting

Handwritten signature of Peter Grigg in black ink.

Peter Grigg, Chief Executive, Home-Start UK

Handwritten signature of Clare Lyons-Collins in black ink.

Clare Lyons-Collins, CEO, Best Beginnings



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Roche-Nagi'.

**Kathleen Roche-Nagi, Director
Approachable Parenting**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Reed'.

**Keith Reed, Chief Executive
Parent-Infant Foundation**



Dr Karen Bateson, Joint CEO, OXPIP